Karsten Müller & Georgios Souleidis

Winning with the Slow (but Venomous!) Italian

WITH A FOREWORD BY **ANISH GIRI**

NEW IDEAS IN CHESS

An Easy-to-Grasp Chess Opening for White

Karsten Müller & Georgios Souleidis

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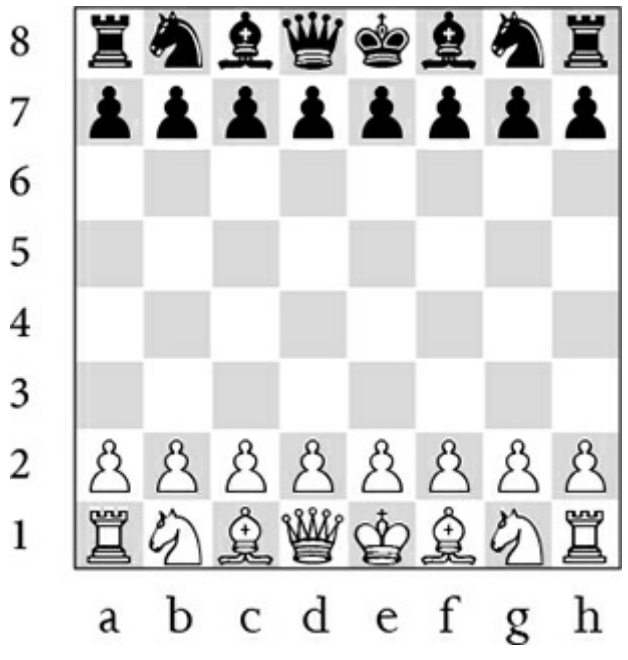
The chessboard with its coordinates:



❑	White to move
■	Black to move
♔	King
♕	Queen
♖	Rook
♗	Bishop
♘	Knight
⩲	White stands slightly better
⩱	Black stands slightly better
±	White stands better
∓	Black stands better
+–	White has a decisive advantage
–+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	balanced position
∞	the position is unclear
⯹	with compensation for the material
!	good move
!!	excellent move
?	bad move
??	blunder
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
⇄	with counterplay
→	with attack
↑	with initiative
#	mate

Foreword by Anish Giri

The opening is the only part of the game that one can predict and plan, so it is no wonder that this aspect of the game fascinates many chess players of all levels and ages. Winning the game with the white pieces straight out of the opening by just memorizing a sequence of moves, as tempting as it sounds, only happens in fairy tales (or in some of my games, but I do this for a living, so don't try this at home). More and more players have realized that the way to approach their White repertoire is to find an opening where the plans are simple, yet harmonious, and the main focus of the game shifts onto the middlegame, the phase where the sharper mind prevails. This, however, is easier said than done. The imaginary tree of openings, expanding on a daily basis with more and more theoretically relevant games pouring in, is hard to navigate; the options are limitless and for every move you make with White there are five alternatives you have to be prepared for.

One easy, yet prideful way out of this opening carousel, or madhouse, if you wish, is the Italian Game, or the Giuoco Piano – the so called Quiet Game. The first ten to fifteen moves are clear (as Karsten and Georgios explain in the very first pages of this book), yet even the strongest players have failed to navigate the labyrinths of this crystal-clear opening. Behind the apparent clarity and simplicity there is a layer of move-order subtleties and nuances that you don't necessarily have to know, but that you may eventually stumble upon anyway.

I have little doubt that the variations in this book are neither complete nor faultless and some of the evaluations are to be doubted. Some, checked under the careful microscope of serious hardware and software, can and probably will be proven over-optimistic for White, and in extreme cases may even be blatantly wrong. But the basic principles, the plans and the concepts as well as the model games offered in this book will help many ambitious chess lovers come closer to understanding the subtleties of this quiet yet fascinating opening.

Personally, I have played many successful games with the Italian Game in games with shorter time controls, but also in some longer and more important games. In the recent Candidates Tournament in Moscow I used it to outwit Hikaru Nakamura, and although he later escaped, Pavel Eljanov, the first player I played after the Candidates tournament, didn't. Hopefully there will be many more victories in the Italian Game for me and for the readers of this book, too.

Anish Giri
June 2016

Preface

Any 1.e4 player knows the problem that 1…e5 is hard to meet and to beat. The Spanish or Ruy Lopez opening is not easy to learn, as Black has so many options to deal with it. So why not choose the Italian Opening, which also is very old and can lead to similar structures? We admit that 3.♗b5 exerts more direct pressure, but it also gives Black more options. The slow Italian with c2-c3 and d2-d3, with the idea of following up later with d3-d4, preserves White's initiative and is not easy to deal with. Black has several options, but does not really have an easy life, as White can often press on until the endgame. Therefore we have also included typical strategies and endgames, and last but not least tactical exercises.

We recommend a schematic set-up plan in Ruy Lopez style with 0-0, ♘b1-d2-f1-g3(-f5), ♖e1, h2-h3, and d3-d4, and if …d6-d5 then exd5, but as usual you need to know a few move order details not to be outsmarted. White can of course also use other set-ups, which we mention briefly as well. For example, the modern trend to play a2-a4 early, with one idea being to follow up with ♘b1-a3, is also looked at. Other White move orders and concepts are also briefly described in Chapter 9. We have unified the move orders according to our repertoire suggestions.

We would like to thank Jonas Lampert and Ufuk Tuncer for ideas, suggestions and analytical corrections, Allard Hoogland and Peter Boel of New in Chess for their good cooperation, Anton Schermer, Frank Erwich and Ian Kingston for the excellent layout, and last but not least super-grandmaster Anish Giri for his foreword.

Karsten Müller and Georgios Souleidis,
Hamburg 2016

Introduction

As an 1.e4 player I struggled for a long time in my career with what to play against 1…e5. As I am not the most hard-working guy in the world I always refused to study the massive amount of theory in the Ruy Lopez. Instead, I tried nearly every other possibility to encounter 1…e5, including dubious stuff like 2.d4 and a gambit that I'd prefer not to name. At some point I realised that I would have to try the Italian Game.

Previously I thought that this was one of the most boring openings in chess history and that it would not be easy to win with it, but to my surprise I started to win game after game, even against stronger opponents, and without studying too much theory. Actually, this should not come as a shock because the Italian Game is a very natural opening and it is no surprise that it was one of the first openings played in chess history. White develops his pieces in a very natural way and brings the king into safety. And from the beginning he is fighting for the centre. These are the basic rules of nearly every opening and this is what a coach teaches his pupils – or at least what he should teach.

Nowadays the Italian Game is my main weapon against 1…e5 and it will probably be so forever. Karsten asked me several times to write a book, but I always refused until he asked me about this opening. I immediately accepted, because I knew that there are many publications from Black's perspective against 1.e4, but very few from White's viewpoint. Of course there is John Emms' classic from 2010, *Beating 1.e4 e5*, but the theory has developed a lot in the past six years, as more and more top players have included the Italian Game in their repertoire, not to mention top grandmasters like Sergei Tiviakov or Ivan Saric who use or have used this opening as their main weapon.

What used to be the main line – 5.d4 – has changed. The new main line is what we present in this book – the Slow Italian after 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3. In this book we cover everything after the moves 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4. I believe we have found a good way to deal with the amount of theory (not to be underestimated) and the demand to present a playable repertoire for the amateur player, who obviously doesn't have the time to study an opening for hours and hours.

We have, of course, used the latest engine technology to analyse every line in this book, and we hope that we are presenting a super-solid repertoire that can be used for years, and also at a higher level. For me personally it will be my reference book for years to come, and I hope for the readers too.

Georgios Souleidis
1 September 2016

Concept of the book

The idea of the Italian Opening is to play with pawns in the centre with c2-c3 and, sooner or later, with d3-d4. In the old days White almost always played d2-d4 in one move very quickly, but modern practice and computer-assisted analysis have shown that this does not lead to an advantage, as it burns the fire of White's initiative too early. For this reason we recommend a slow burning approach with c2-c3 and only d2-d3 first. This started to catch on among grandmasters relatively late in the 1970s, but it has developed a lot since then. It can be compared with a Ruy Lopez with c2-c3 and d2-d3, and a few lines do indeed transpose.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4

The starting position of this book has been reached. White plans to castle short, to play c2-c3, d2-d3, h2-h3, ♖e1, ♘b1-d2-f1 and then proceed with ♘g3, ♗e3 or d3-d4. This plan is very easy to remember and the following strategies are also very clear.

3...♗c5

For sidelines like 3...g6 see Chapter 1.

3...♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 (for the other main move 4...♗e7 and sidelines see Chapter 3) 5.c3 transposes.

4.c3

For the move order 4.0-0, see Chapter 9. Here it is often very important that White does not play h2-h3 when Black has not yet castled.

This move is directed against a quick ...d7-d5.

4...♘f6

For sidelines like 4...♕f6, see Chapter 2.

5.d3!?

The defining move of the Slow Italian.

5.d4 is the main line in the spirit of the old times, but nowadays it has been overtaken by 5.d3.

5...d6

5...d5? is a typical mistake due to 6.exd5 ♘xd5 7.♕b3+–.

5...0-0 6.0-0 (for the move order 6.♘bd2 to meet an early ...d7-d5 with exd5 followed by ♘e4, see Chapter 4.4) 6...d6 transposes (for 6...d5, see Chapter 4.1 and 4.2 and for 6...a6 7.♘bd2 d5, see Chapter 4.3).

5...a6 6.0-0 ♗a7 (6...0-0 7.♘bd2 ♗a7 8.h3 d5 is the same) 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.h3 d5 is another move order which leads to Chapter 4.3 (8...d6 transposes to the main line).

6.0-0 0-0

6…♗b6 with the idea …♘c6-e7-g6: see Chapter 6.2.
6…♗g4 7.♘bd2: see Chapter 5.1.

7.♘bd2

This move order is favoured by the specialists Giri and Nisipeanu.
For the modern alternative approach 7.a4!? to follow up with ♘b1-a3-c2, see Chapter 9.4.

7...a6

7…♘e7: see Chapter 6.
7…♘a5 is met by 8.♗b5!? (the computer prefers 8.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 9.b4±, but this is more messy than our suggestion) 8...a6 9.♗a4 b5 10.♗c2±;
7…♗e6 8.b4: see Chapter 5.4.
7…a5: see Chapter 5.4.3.

8.♗b3

The bishop should be preserved against the potential threat …♘a5.

8...♗a7

For 8…♗e6 9.h3 or 9.♖e1, see respectively Chapters 8.1.3.2 and 8.1.3.3. 9.♗c2 is the choice of Anish Giri to preserve the light squared bishop – see Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter for a repertoire based on meeting …♗e6 with ♗c2.

9.h3!

An important point to remember, as 9.♖e1?! can be met by 9…♘g4 10.♖e2 ♔h8 11.h3 ♘h6 (even the direct 11…f5!? is interesting) 12.♘f1 f5 which plays into Black's hands.

9...h6

9…♘e7: see Chapter 6.3.
9…♗e6 10.♖e1: see Chapter 8 (for the interesting alternative 10.♗c2, see Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter).
After 9…♘h5, 10.♘c4! is very important. See Chapter 7.1.

10.♖e1

10...♖e8

10...♗e6 11.♘f1: see Chapter 8. 11.♗c2 is another move order.

10...♘h5: see Chapter 7.2.

11.♘f1 ♗e6 12.♘g3

12.♗c2 is another move order.

12...♕d7

12...d5: see Chapter 8. 12...♗xb3 is usually met by 13.♕xb3 (see Chapter 8), but when Black has played ...h7-h6 then White can also very seriously consider 13.axb3!? (see Chapter 8).

13.♗c2 d5

See Chapter 8.

Move order

Usually you can just play the main schematic set-up plan 0-0, ♖e1, ♘bd2-f1-g3 (for the modern approach with a2-a4 and ♘b1-a3-c2 see Chapter 9) and ♗b3-c2 in any order. Sometimes we have given ways to create more pressure, but that set-up is usually also playable. However, the following points deserve special attention:

1) Before playing ♖f1-e1 you should check that ...♘g4 is not dangerous. Otherwise Black can often follow up with ...f7-f5 quickly. In our main repertoire we play ♖e1 very late.

2) h2-h3 is usually only played after Black has castled. Otherwise Black can aim for ...g7-g5-g4. Furthermore Black can sacrifice on h3 in several lines, especially when his dark-squared bishop controls the a7-g1 diagonal. Watch out for this!

3) Make sure that you can meet ...d7-d5 in the way you want to meet it, or stop it with an early ♖e1. In our recommended move order with ♘bd2 White often has an early ♘e4 or ♖e1 against an early ...d7-d5, but you should study these lines in detail as it is important to use the initiative here directly.

4) We suggest keeping the bishop on b3 for as long as possible and only retreating it at the 13th move – see Chapter 8 – but meeting ...♗e6 always with ♗c2 definitely also comes into consideration – see Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter for a repertoire suggestion with this guideline. If Black takes on b3 we usually take back with the queen, but if Black has already played ...h7-h6 then axb3 also often comes strongly into consideration.

5) White's bishop usually stays on c4 until Black threatens ...♘a5. Then ♗b3 should be played.

6) The central advance d3-d4 should usually not be played early and only after preparation. Often the queen's knight should already be on g3.

7) ...♗g4 is usually not dangerous and often just helps White.

8) Remember to meet 9...♘h5 with 10.♘c4! as this is an exception to the standard set

up – see Chapter 7.1.

One way to gain a first impression of an opening is to choose heroes and to study their games. Here we recommend for example Giri, Nisipeanu, Saric, Delchev, Short, Socko, Tiviakov, Areschenko, Anna Muzychuk and Hou Yifan.

Chapter 1
Third move sidelines

In the first chapter we will take a look at all the more or less sensible moves apart from 3…♗c5 and 3…♘f6.
Three of them – 3…f5?!, 3…♘d4?! and 3…h6?! – are dubious because Black neglects his development. White gets an advantage with natural moves. After 3…d6 and 3…♗e7 White can transpose to Chapter 3, but we also offer an independent possibility which promises White an advantage. 3…g6 is an interesting attempt to avoid highly theoretical paths. Black's plan is a little slow, so White has to play energetically in the centre. With the offer of a nice pawn sacrifice he grabs the initiative and enjoys a better position after the opening.

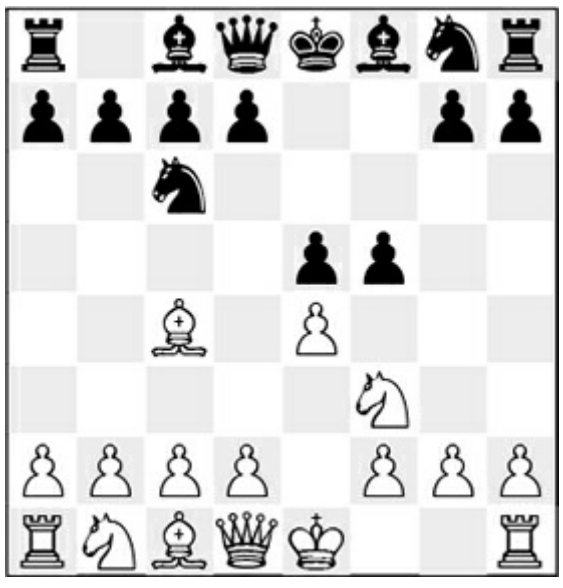
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4

The following moves are played mostly at amateur level.

3...g6

This attempt can be considered seriously. Black wants to develop his bishop to g7 and his knight on g8 to e7.

A) **3…f5?!**



analysis diagram

This hyper-aggressive move weakens the kingside and contradicts the general rules in the opening. White gets a big advantage with either 4.d4 or 4.d3.

A1) **4.d4** and now:

A11) **4…fxe4 5.♘xe5 d5 6.♗b5 ♕d6 7.c4! a6 8.♗xc6+** 8.♗a4 b5 9.cxb5 ♘xe5 10.dxe5 ♕xe5 11.b6+ ♗d7 12.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 13.♗e3 ♗b4+ 14.♘c3 ♗xc3+ 15.bxc3 cxb6 16.♗d4± Wosch-Daenen, LSS email 2007. **8…bxc6 9.0-0 ♘f6 10.♘c3 ♗e7 11.♗f4 ♕e6 12.f3**± Stanitz-Daenen, ICCF email 2009;

A12) **4…exd4 5.e5!**

analysis diagram

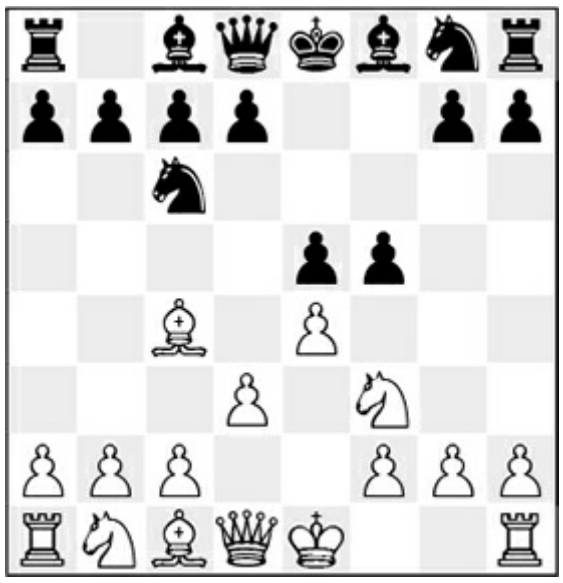
This move is very convincing, as the following examples show. The black king comes under fire. **5…d6** The subsequent moves are more or less forced, and the result of the following correspondence game puts an end to this variation. 5…♗b4+?! 6.c3! dxc3 7.bxc3 ♗f8? (7…d5 8.♗xd5 ♗c5 9.♗a3 ♗xa3 10.♘xa3 ♘ge7 11.c4±) 8.♗g5 ♘ge7 9.♕b3 d5 10.exd6 ♕xd6 11.♗f7+ ♔d8 12.0-0+– Burk-Holwell, corr 1990. **6.exd6** ♕**xd6** 6…♗xd6 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.♖e1+ ♔f8 9.c3±. **7.0-0** ♗**e7 8.**♖**e1** ♗**d7 9.**♘**g5** ♘**h6 10.**♘**e6!** ♗**xe6 11.**♖**xe6** ♕**c5 12.b3! 0-0-0 13.**♗**a3**

analysis diagram

13…♘**b4 14.**♕**e1!** ♘**xc2 15.**♗**xc5** ♘**xe1 16.**♖**xe7** ♘**c2 17.**♘**a3** ♘**xa1 18.**♘**b5! b6** 18…d3? 19.♗xa7!+–; 18…♖he8 19.♗e6+ ♔b8 20.♗xa7+ ♔a8 21.♖xe8 ♖xe8 22.♘xc7+ ♔xa7 23.♘xe8 d3 24.♔f1 g6 25.♗c4±. **19.**♗**b4 d3 20.**♗**d2 g5?!** 20…♖he8 21.♖xc7+ ♔b8 22.♖xg7 ♘g4 23.♘c7 ♖e2 24.♘a6+ ♔a8 25.♖g8! ♔b7 26.♖xd8 ♖xd2 27.♖d7+ ♔c8 28.♖xd3±. **21.**♘**xc7+–** Voracek-Vegjeleki, ICCF email 2007)

A13) **4…d6 5.**♘**g5** ♘**h6** (Gardner-Jung, Brantford 1999) **6.d5!N** ♘**e7 7.**♘**c3**±

A2) **4.d3**



analysis diagram

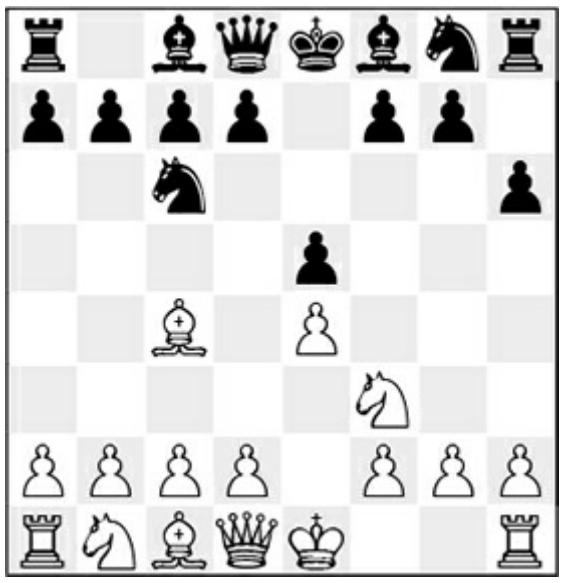
4…♘f6 4…d6 5.0-0 ♗e7 (5…f4 (Milosevic-Costa, Switzerland tt 1993) 6.d4!N ♗g4 7.♗b5 ♘ge7 8.d5 a6 9.♗e2±) 6.♘c3 ♗f6 (Reeh-Bach, Hamburg 2000) 7.b4!?N fxe4 (7…♘xb4 8.♖b1 ♘c6 9.exf5 ♗xf5 10.d4 ♘ge7 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♕e2±) 8.dxe4 ♘xb4 9.♖b1 ♘c6 10.h3±. **5.0-0 ♗c5 6.♘c3 d6** 6…f4 7.♘d5 d6 8.c3 ♗g4 9.b4 ♗b6 10.a4 a5 11.♘xb6 cxb6 (Bojkov-Dimitrov, Sunny Beach 2012) 12.b5 ♘e7 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♗e6 ♘g6 15.g4! fxg3 16.fxg3±. **7.♗g5! ♘a5** 7…h6? 8.♗xf6 gxf6 9.exf5 h5 10.♘h4 ♘d4 11.♘e4 ♘xf5 12.♘xf5 ♗xf5 13.♘xc5 dxc5 14.♕f3±. **8.♗xf6 ♕xf6 9.♘d5 ♕d8 10.b4 ♘xc4 11.bxc5 fxe4 12.dxc4 exf3 13.♕xf3 c6 14.♘c3 ♕f6 15.♘e4 ♕xf3 16.♘xd6+ ♔e7 17.gxf3±** Fryer-Lyell, Hastings 2003.

B) **3…♘d4?!**

analysis diagram

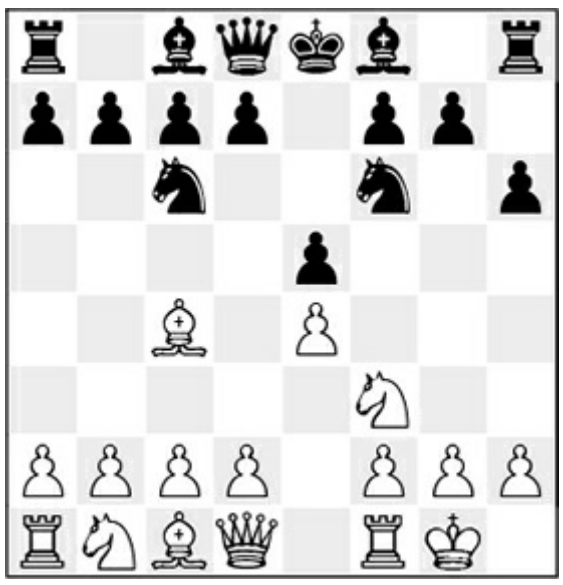
4.♘xd4 4.♘xe5?! ♕g5! is a very well known old trap. Although the position after 5.♗xf7+ ♔d8 6.0-0! ♕xe5 7.c3 ♘e6 8.d3 is far from clear, it makes sense for White to react in a more natural and conservative manner. **4…exd4 5.0-0 ♘f6 6.♖e1 d6 7.c3±** White has a lead in development and takes control over the centre.

C) **3…h6?!**



analysis diagram

This is played quite a lot at amateur level. Black worries about the knight jumping to g5. Obviously the move loses precious time. **4.0-0 ♘f6** 4…♗c5 5.c3 (of course. White builds up a strong centre) 5…d6 6.d4 exd4 (6…♗b6 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 9.♘xe5±) 7.cxd4 ♗b6 8.♘c3 (8.♕b3?! (Antonio-Ahmed, Ha Long City 2009) 8…♘a5! 9.♕a4+ ♗d7 10.♗b5 ♘f6∞) 8…♘ge7 (8…♘f6 9.h3 0-0 10.♖e1±; 8…♗g4 9.♗b5±) 9.h3±.



analysis diagram

5.d4! Exploiting Black's poor move order. 5.d3 leads to Chapter 3 after 4…h6. **5…exd4 6.e5! d5 7.♗b5 ♘e4 8.♘xd4 ♗d7 9.♗xc6** 9.e6!? fxe6 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.♕h5+ ♔e7 12.♘d2 ♘f6 (Antal-Sandi, Indianapolis 2009) and here 13.♕e2!N improves on White's play, but it's not clear whether White gets enough compensation. **9…bxc6** leads to a theoretically well-known position – usually arising after 3…♘f6 4.d4 – where White has played the useful move 0-0 whereas Black has lost time with …h7-h6 instead of developing his bishop on f8. **10.f3 ♘g5 11.f4 ♘e4 12.♘c3!** Undermining the strong knight on e4. **12…c5** 12…♘xc3 13.bxc3 c5 14.e6!⊡; 12…♗c5 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♗e3 0-0 15.♕e2±. **13.♘de2 ♘xc3 14.bxc3!**± White threatens a kingside assault with f4-f5.

D) **3…d6**

analysis diagram

After this modest move White can decide whether to play straight away for an opening advantage by conquering the centre or to transpose to the main line in Chapter 3. **4.c3!** Objectively better than 4.0-0, as it leads to an advantage in all lines. 4.0-0 ♘f6 (4…♗e7 5.a4 ♘f6 6.d3 0-0 7.♖e1 leads to Chapter 3) 5.♖e1 ♗e7 (5…♘xe4?? 6.♖xe4 d5 7.♘xe5!+–) 6.a4!. We found only one game where White played this move in this position. (6.d3 allows 6…♘a5! and White cannot avoid the exchange of his good light-squared bishop) 6…0-0 (6…♘xe4 is a typical idea that doesn't seem to work for Black in this concrete situation: 7.♖xe4 d5 8.♗xd5 ♕xd5 9.♘c3 ♕a5 10.♖b1! 0-0 11.♘xe5! ♘xe5 12.b4 ♗xb4 13.♖bxb4. The white rooks make Black's life hard, for example: 13… ♘g6 14.♗a3 ♕a6 15.h4± with an initiative) 7.d3 and we have reached Chapter 3.

analysis diagram

D1) **4…♘f6?! 5.♘g5! d5** 5…♗e6 6.♘xe6! fxe6 7.♕b3!±. **6.exd5 ♘xd5 7.d4** This is a well-known position, usually arising after 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.♘g5 d5 etc. Here White has an extra tempo as Black has played first …d7-d6 and then …d6-d5. **7…♗e7 8.♘xf7 ♔xf7 9.♕f3+ ♔e6 10.0-0 ♖f8 11.♕e4±** White has a tremendous attack, as several correspondence games confirm;

D2) **4…♗e7 5.♕b3 ♘h6** 5…♘a5? 6.♗xf7+ ♔f8 7.♕a4 ♔xf7 8.♕xa5± is just a pawn up for White. **6.d4 0-0** 6…♘a5? 7.♕a4+ c6 8.♗e2±. **7.♗xh6 gxh6** White has the better structure and enjoys a small plus, e.g.: 8.0-0 ♘a5 9.♕a4 ♘xc4 10.♕xc4 ♗g4 11.♘bd2 ♗g5 12.♖fe1 c5 13.♕d3 ♖c8 14.♘xg5 hxg5 15.♘f1 exd4 16.cxd4 ♕f6 17.♕g3 ♕f4 18.♘e3± Mujunen-Zhuravlev, ICCF email 2014;

D3) 4…♗g4 5.d4 ♗xf3 6.♕xf3 ♕f6 7.♗e3 ♕xf3 8.gxf3±;

D4) **4…h6 5.0-0 ♘f6 6.d4 ♗e7** 6…♘xe4 7.dxe5 ♗e6?! (7…♗e7 8.♖e1 ♗f5 9.♘d4! ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 d5 11.♗xd5 ♘c5 12.♗c4±) 8.♗xe6 fxe6 9.♘d4! ♘xd4 10.♕h5+ ♔d7

11.cxd4± Zelcic-Krnic, Zadar 1994. **7.♖e1 0-0** 7…♗g4 8.♗b5±. **8.h3±**

E) **3…♗e7** As after 3…d6 White can choose between transposing to Chapter 3 or trying to get an advantage with tricky play.

analysis diagram

4.d4 4.0-0 ♘f6 (4…d6 5.a4 ♘f6 6.d3 0-0 7.♖e1 leads to Chapter 3) 5.d3 0-0 6.♖e1 leads to Chapter 3. **4…exd4** On 4…d6, 5.d5 is the engines' favourite as they like to grab space (5.dxe5 dxe5 6.♕xd8+ ♗xd8, 7.♘c3 also offers White good prospects, as in Vasiukov-Gheorghiu, Manila 1974, in our Strategy chapter) 5…♘b8 6.♗d3 ♘f6 7.c4 ♘bd7 8.♘c3 a5 9.h3 ♘c5 10.♗c2 0-0 11.♗e3 b6 12.a3± and White now has a good version of a 'King's Indian' position. **5.c3!?**

analysis diagram

After this move it is very easy for Black to go astray.

E1) 5…d6?! 6.♕b3 ♘a5 7.♗xf7+ ♔f8 8.♕a4 ♔xf7 9.♕xa5 ♘f6 10.cxd4±;

E2) 5…dxc3?! 6.♕d5.

analysis diagram

Many games have, not surprisingly, been resigned at this point, but it is still possible for Black to continue to fight with 6…♘h6 7.♗xh6 0-0 8.♗xg7 ♔xg7 9.♘xc3 d6 10.♕d3±;

E3) 5…d3 6.♕b3 ♘a5 7.♗xf7+ ♔f8 8.♕a4 ♔xf7 9.♕xa5 d5 10.♘e5+ ♔f8 11.♕xd5 ♕xd5 12.exd5±;

E4) 5…♘f6?! 6.e5 ♘e4 7.♗d5!±;

E5) **5…♘a5! 6.♗e2 dxc3** 6…d5 7.♕a4+ c6 8.exd5 ♘f6 9.dxc6 ♘xc6 10.♘xd4±. **7.♘xc3 d6 8.0-0 ♘f6** 8…♘c6 9.♕b3 ♘f6 10.♖d1 ♘d7 11.♗e3 0-0 12.h3 ♕e8 13.♖ac1⩲ Ardelean-Pessi, Baile Olanesti 2010. **9.♕a4+ ♘c6 10.e5 dxe5** 10…♘d7 (Andriasyan-Erturan, Dresden Ech 2007) 11.♕g4!N ♔f8 (11…0-0 12.♗h6 g6 13.♗xf8±; 11…♘dxe5 12.♕xg7 ♗f6 13.♕h6±) 12.exd6 ♗xd6 13.♗g5⩲. **11.♘xe5 ♗d7** A.Horvath-Pastor Alonso de Prado, Madrid 2012; 11…0-0 12.♖d1 ♗d6 13.♘c4 ♗e6 14.♘xd6 cxd6 15.♕h4 d5 16.♗g5 h6 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♕xf6 gxf6 19.♘xd5±. **12.♘xd7!N ♕xd7** 12…♘xd7 13.♖d1 0-0 14.♗f4 ♗d6 15.♗xd6 cxd6 16.♖xd6 ♕e7 17.♖ad1±. **13.♖d1 ♕c8** 13…♗d6?! 14.♗g5 0-0 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♕h4±. **14.♗f4⩲**

4.d4

A good reaction. White immediately attacks the centre as he has a lead in development.

4...exd4 5.c3!

5.♘xd4 ♗g7 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.0-0 ♘e7 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♗g5 d6 10.♕d2 ♗e6 11.♗b3 ♕d7 12.♖fe1 ♖fe8 (Ganguly-Mamedyarov, Doha 2014) 13.♖ad1N looks a bit better for White, but Black has the nice resource 13…♘c8 with the idea of …♘b6 and pushing the c- and/or a-pawn.

5...d3!

A) **5...♗g7 6.cxd4** This position promises White an edge because of his better control of the centre. **6...d6** Here White can even choose how to gain an advantage. 6...♘ge7 (Lapshun-Guramishvili, Banyoles 2007) 7.d5!N ♘a5 (7...♘b8?! 8.d6!±; 7...♘e5 8.♘xe5 ♗xe5 9.0-0 d6 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♗g5±) 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 d6 10.♘c3±. White has a space advantage and Black needs time to get his knight on a5 back into play.

Now:

A1) **7.♕b3 ♕d7** (Flores-Pina Gomez, Villa Ballester 2004) **8.♗d2!N**

analysis diagram

8...a6 8...♘xd4 9.♘xd4 ♗xd4 10.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 11.♕a4+ ♗d7 12.♕xd4 ♘f6 13.♘c3±. **9.d5 ♘e5 10.♘xe5 ♗xe5 11.0-0 ♕e7 12.♖e1 ♘f6** 12...♗g7?! 13.♗b4 f6 14.f4 ♘h6 15.♘d2 0-0 16.♘f3±. **13.f4 ♗d4+ 14.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 15.♕xe3 0-0 16.♘c3±**;

A2) 7.d5 ♘ce7 (Ptacnikova-Hj.Gretarsson, Reykjavik 2015) 8.0-0!N ♘f6 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♗f4±;

A3) **7.0-0**

A31) **7...♘f6 8.♘c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘xe4** 9...♘a5 10.♗d3 c5 11.dxc5 (11.♗f4!? cxd4 12.♘b5 a6 13.♘xd6 ♗e6 14.e5 ♘d5 15.♗g3±) 11...dxc5 (Hendrickson-Finegold, St Louis 2013) 12.♗g5N h6 13.♗e3±. **10.♘xe4 d5 11.♗g5 f6 12.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13.♗xf6 ♖xf6** (Krivokapic-Batricevic, Tivat 2011) 14.♗b3!±;

A32) **7...♘ge7 8.♘c3 0-0 9.h3 h6** (9...♘a5 10.♗e2 d5 11.e5±) 10.♖e1± Ramnath-Sidhant, Mumbai 2014.

B) **5...dxc3?!** This dubious move is more or less untested in practice, and rightly so.

B1) **6.♘xc3** and now:

B11) **6...♗g7?! 7.♕b3! ♕e7** 7...♘h6 8.♗xh6 ♗xh6 9.♗xf7+ ♔f8 10.♗d5±.

analysis diagram

8.♘d5! ♕xe4+ 9.♗e2! ♔d8 10.0-0 ♕xe2 10…♘ge7 11.♗g5 h6 12.♘xe7 ♘xe7 13.♗d3 ♕c6 14.♖ac1+–. **11.♗g5+ f6 12.♖fe1+–** and here the computer wants to sacrifice the queen in order to avoid immediate loss;

B12) 6…d6 (Reinert-Hvenekilde, Allerod 1984) 7.0-0!N ♗g7 8.♗g5 ♘ge7 9.♕b3 0-0 10.♘d5 ♔h8 11.♘xe7 ♘xe7 12.♗xf7±.

B2) **6.♕b3!?N** is the computer's favourite: **6…♕e7** 6…♘h6?! 7.0-0! ♗g7 (7…♘a5?? 8.♕xc3+–) 8.♗xh6 ♗xh6 9.♗xf7+ ♔f8 10.♘xc3 ♔g7 11.e5 ♖f8 12.♗d5±. **7.♘xc3 ♘a5** 7…♗g7?! leads to Variation B11: 6.♘xc3 ♗g7 7.♕b3! ♕e7; see diagram above. **8.♕b5 ♘xc4 9.♕xc4 c6 10.0-0 d6 11.♗f4 ♗g4 12.♖ad1 ♗xf3 13.gxf3 ♖d8 14.♕d4 f6 15.♕xa7 ±**

6.0-0

Other moves are equally good and promise White a small edge as well.

A) 6.♗g5!? (disturbing Black's harmony) 6…♗e7 (Pokorna-Matnadze, Germany Bundesliga W 2012/13) 7.♗f4!N ♘f6 8.♕xd3 0-0 9.0-0 d6 10.♘bd2±;

B) 6.♕xd3 ♗g7 7.0-0 ♘ge7 8.♗f4 d6 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.♖ad1 h6 11.♖fe1 g5 12.♗g3 ♘g6 (Pourkashiyan-Melia, Halkidiki jr 2003) 13.h3!±.

6…♗g7 7.♗g5 ♘ge7 8.♕xd3

8…d6

8…h6 9.♗e3 d6 10.♕d2 (10.♘bd2 leads to the text) 10…♗e6 11.♗xe6 fxe6 12.♘a3 ♕d7 13.♘c2 g5= Schippers-Semcesen, Vlissingen 2014.

9.♘bd2!N

9.♕e3 h6! 10.♗h4 (Jayakumaar-Rajdeep, Jammu jr 2015) 10…0-0=.

9…h6

9…0-0 10.♕e3!±.

10.♗e3 0-0 11.♖ad1 a6 12.♕c2

White enjoys a small plus due to his better development, better piece placement and small space advantage.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have focussed on rare moves after 3.♗c4. After 3…f5?!, 3…♘d4?! and 3…h6?! White has the upper hand. After 3…d6 and 3…♗e7 White can transpose to Chapter 3 or try to get an immediate advantage. 3…g6 has to be considered seriously. White gets a small advantage by opening up the centre and developing his pieces naturally in the centre. Black has quite a solid position, but he has weakened his kingside a little and has problems finishing his development without further weakening the position.

Chapter 2
Italian fourth move sidelines

In this chapter we will deal with some minor lines after 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3.

4…♕f6?! is an example of why we should not develop the queen so early in the opening. Even if Black has four pieces controlling the square d4, White can still push the d-pawn and gain a big advantage out of the opening.

4…♕e7 is much more solid. Black is giving up the centre and plans an attack on the kingside as soon as both sides have finished the main part of their development. We recommend you to study the lines presented carefully in order to avoid being caught by surprise.

4…d6 looks very modest and it seems that White can get a nice centre straight away with 5.d4. But there is a small trap included in the main line. Only after 5…exd4 6.cxd4 ♗b6 and now 7.♗b5! can White claim an advantage. This is something you can easily miss over the board.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 d6

A) **4…♕e7**

analysis diagram

This is an old solid line. Black wants to keep the centre closed. **5.0-0 d6** 5…♘f6 6.d4 ♗b6 (Abergel-Smits, Belgium tt 2007/08) 7.a4!N a6 8.♖e1 leads most probably to the same position as after 5…d6, as Black doesn't really have any options to deviate. **6.d4! ♗b6** The only move. It would be suicide to open up the centre with the queen on e7. **7.a4! a6 8.h3** 8.d5 ♘b8 9.♘bd2± is the engine's suggestion, but it's not to everybody's taste to close the centre. If you like such positions, go for it. You will enjoy a space advantage, but you will have to watch out for possible black counterplay on the kingside. **8…♘f6 9.♖e1** and now:

analysis diagram

A1) **9…h6 10.♗e3 ♗a7** 10…♘xe4? 11.dxe5 ♗xe3 12.♕xe3 d5 13.♗xd5±.
11.♘bd2 0-0 (Jovanovic-Zupe, Bizovac 2009) **12.a5!N ♘h5 13.♗b3 ♕f6 14.♘c4 ♘f4 15.♗xf4 ♕xf4 16.♘e3 ♘e7 17.♖a4±**;

A2) **9…0-0 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗h4** White has to study this position quite carefully, as Black has some interesting possibilities for creating counterplay.

analysis diagram

A21) 11…exd4 12.cxd4 g5 13.♗g3 g4 14.hxg4 ♗xg4. At first sight this seems good for Black, but with concrete play White can exploit the weakness of Black's kingside: 15.♘c3! ♘xd4 16.e5! ♗xf3 17.gxf3 dxe5 18.♖xe5 ♕d8 19.a5 ♗a7 20.♔g2±;

A22) 11…g5 12.♗g3 ♘h5 13.♗h2 (13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♗xe5 dxe5 15.♕xh5 ♔g7⩲) 13…g4 14.hxg4 ♗xg4 15.♗e2 ♕f6 16.♘a3 ♘f4 17.♗xf4 ♕xf4 18.♘c4 ♗xf3 19.♗xf3 ♗a7 20.g3 ♕g5 21.♘e3 exd4 22.♘f5 dxc3 23.bxc3 with the idea of playing ♔g2 and ♖h1 looks very promising for White;

A23) **11…♔h7** (Anand-Sundararajan, Madras sim 1998) **12.♘a3!N** White is better for sure, but he has to be careful, e.g. **12…g5 13.♗g3 g4 14.hxg4 ♗xg4**

analysis diagram

15.♗h4! With some energetic moves White proves that the black king is eventually more exposed. We give a few lines, which should also be checked by the reader: **15...exd4** 15...♖g8 16.♘c2 ♖g6 17.♘e3±. **16.e5! dxe5 17.a5! ♗a7** 17...♗xa5 18.♗d3+ ♔g7 19.♘c4 ♗b6 20.cxd4 ♕e6 (20...♘xd4? 21.♖xe5 ♕d8 22.♘xb6 cxb6 23.♕d2! ♗xf3 24.♖g5+! ♔h8 25.♖h5!+–) 21.♘cxe5+–. **18.cxd4** and now:

A231) 18...♘xd4 19.♗d3+ ♔g8 20.♕d2! ♘xf3+ 21.gxf3 ♖ad8 22.♕xh6 ♗xf2+ 23.♗xf2 ♖xd3 24.♘c4+–. Black is losing material;

A232) 18...e4 19.♖xe4! ♕xe4 20.♗d3 ♕g6 21.♗xg6+ fxg6 22.♕b3±;

A233) 18...♕d6 19.dxe5 ♕xd1 20.♖axd1±. The activity of his pieces gives White a clear advantage, even if the position is still a bit chaotic.

B) **4...♗b6**

analysis diagram

5.d4 exd4 5...♕e7 transposes to 4...♕e7; 5...d6?! just loses a pawn after 6.dxe5 dxe5 (6...♘xe5 7.♘xe5 dxe5 8.♗xf7+!±; 6...♕e7 7.exd6 ♕xe4+ 8.♗e2 ♕g6 9.0-0 ♕xd6 10.♕xd6 cxd6 11.♖e1± is probably the best Black can get after 5...d6?!) 7.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 (7...♔xd8 8.♗xf7±) 8.♘xe5 ♘f6 9.f3±. **6.cxd4 d6** leads to the main line;

C) **4...♕f6?**!

analysis diagram

This move doesn't really prevent **5.d4!**:

C1) **5…exd4 6.e5!**

C11) 6…♕d8?! 7.cxd4 ♗b4+ (7…d5 8.exd6 ♗xd6 9.0-0±) 8.♘c3 d5 9.exd6 ♕xd6 10.0-0+– Benderac-Scekic, Nis 1997;

C12) 6…♕f5?! (Dzindzichashvili-Comp Fritz 2, New York 1993) 7.cxd4!N ♗b4+ 8.♘c3 d5 9.♗xd5 ♘ge7 10.♗c4±;

C13) 6…♕g6 7.cxd4 ♗b4+ 8.♘c3 d5 (Kiik-Kivimaki, Jyväskylä 2012; 8…♕xg2? 9.♖g1 ♕h3 10.♗xf7+!+–) 9.exd6!N ♗xd6 10.d5 ♘ce7 11.0-0 ♘f6 12.♘b5 0-0 13.♘xd6 cxd6 14.♖e1±.

C2) **5…♗b6 6.0-0 h6** 6…d6 7.♗g5 ♕g6 8.dxe5 ♗g4 (8…dxe5? 9.♘xe5! ♕xg5 10.♘xf7±; 8…♗h3 9.gxh3 h6 10.exd6 cxd6 11.♕d5±) 9.exd6 cxd6 10.♘bd2± Pötsch-Dauth, Berlin 2015. Black has no compensation and no attack for the pawn.

analysis diagram

7.a4! a6 8.dxe5 8.a5 ♗a7 9.♗b3 ♘ge7 10.d5 ♘d8 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.fxe3 d6 13.♗a4+ ♔f8 c4± Nogler-W.Richter, Remote email. **8…♘xe5 9.♘xe5 ♕xe5 10.♕b3 ♘f6?** 10…♕h5 11.♗f4±. **11.♗xf7+ ♔e7 12.♘d2 ♘g4 13.♘f3 ♕xe4 14.♗d2 ♔d8 15.a5 ♗a7 16.♖a4 1-0** Egin-Saidov, Tashkent ch-UZB 2009.

5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 ♗b6

After 6…♗b4+?! 7.♘c3 ♘f6 8.0-0 White gets a fantastic version of the Greco Attack because Black has lost a tempo with 4…d6. There is nothing really much to analyse, because you will probably never have to play this over the board. We give only a nice short game. 8…♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♘xe4 10.♖e1 d5

analysis diagram

11.♖xe4+ dxe4 12.♘g5 0-0?! (12...♘e5 13.♕h5 g6 14.♕h6 ♘xc4 15.♕g7 ♘d6 16.♕xh8+ ♔d7 17.♕g7±; 12...♗e6 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.♘xe6 ♕d7 15.d5±) 13.♕h5 h6 14.♘xf7 ♖xf7 15.♗xf7+ ♔f8 (15...♔h8 16.♗xh6 ♗g4 17.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 18.♕g6+ ♔f8 19.♗b3+–) 16.♗a3+ ♘e7 17.♗c4 ♕e8 18.♕d5 1-0 Khairul-Laksana, Jakarta 2011.

7.♗b5!±

Only after this move can White claim an advantage. Black has to parry the threat of 8.d5 and White gets enough time to consolidate his nice centre. 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.♘c3 0-0 9.h3 (9.d5 ♘e5 doesn't promise White anything either) runs into the typical manoeuvre 9...♘xe4! 10.♘xe4 d5=. This is the above-mentioned little trap that Black is playing for.

7...♗d7 8.♘c3

8.0-0 ♘f6 9.e5!? (9.♘c3 0-0 10.h3±) 9...dxe5 10.dxe5 ♘e4 11.♕e2 ♘c5 (Della Morte-Garcia Palermo, Buenos Aires 2014) 12.♖d1!?N 0-0 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♘c3±.

8...♘ge7 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 a6

10...♘g6 11.♖e1 (11.♗g5 ♘ce7 12.♗c4 h6 13.♗e3 c6 14.♖e1 ♖c8 15.♕b3± Videki-Rachela, Hungary tt 2010/11) 11...♘h4 (Jurcik-Rachela, Slovakia tt 2011/12) 12.♘xh4!N ♕xh4 13.♗e3±.

11.♗a4 h6

11...♘g6 12.♖e1 ♘h4 13.♘xh4 ♕xh4 14.♗e3 ♗a5 (Farkas-Fodor, Hungary tt 2007/08) 15.♖c1!N (15.f3?! ♗xh3!) 15...♖ae8 16.d5 ♘e5 17.♗xd7 ♘xd7 18.♕a4 ♗xc3 19.♖xc3 ♘f6 20.♖xc7 ♖xe4 21.♕b3 ♖b4 22.♕c2 h6 (22...♘xd5?! 23.♖c8!) 23.♗d2↑.

12.♖e1 ♘g6 13.♗e3 ♘ce7 14.♗b3 ♗a5 15.♘d2 ♔h7

15...b5!? 16.f4 c5 17.dxc5 dxc5 18.f5 c4 19.fxg6 cxb3 20.♘xb3 ♗xc3 21.gxf7+ ♖xf7 22.bxc3±.

16.♕h5 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♕e8

Godena-Garcia Palermo, Italy tt 2014.

18.g4!N ♘g8

Otherwise White follows up with f2-f4 and gains a big space advantage.

19.g5 f5 20.exf5 ♗xf5

20...♖xf5 21.♗c2 ♕f7 22.♗xf5 ♕xf5 23.♕g4±.

21.gxh6 ♘f4 22.♕xe8 ♘xh3+ 23.♔g2 ♖axe8 24.♖h1 ♘xh6

24...♘xf2 25.♗xg8+! ♔xg8 26.hxg7 ♘xh1 27.gxf8♕+ ♔xf8 28.♗h6+ ♔f7 29.♖xh1±.

25.♖xh3 ♗xh3+ 26.♔xh3±

White obviously has the upper hand in this endgame, with the strong bishop pair against a rook and only one pawn.

Conclusion

In all the lines presented in this chapter White is able to get an advantage. 4...♕f6 is just dubious, whereas 4...♕e7 and 4...d6 are more solid. After 4...♕e7 White is able to establish a strong centre. After that he can close the centre and gain a significant space advantage or play dynamically. In this case he has to be prepared to shut down potential black counterplay on the kingside. After 4...d6 White has to remember the nice idea 7.♗b5!, which gives him enough time to secure a nice centre.

Chapter 3
Two Knights without …♗c5

In this chapter we will deal with the second main move 3…♘f6 and all reasonable lines.

after 4.d3 except 4…♗c5, which would lead to the main line. After 4.d3 the main option for Black is 4…♗e7. We will also examine 4…h6 and the rarely played 4…d6?! and 4…d5?!. After 4…h6 White gets a nice edge with active play in the centre. In the main line we will take an extensive look at the critical line after 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 and now 7.a4. After White's 7th move there are no fewer than seven black moves for us to examine. 7…h6 and 7…a5 are quite interesting, but White gets the more pleasant position. 7…♔h8 initiates an aggressive plan on the kingside. This move is recommended in some books, but we will show how White gets an edge. 7…♗e6 is a very solid move with the idea of exchanging the strong bishop on c4. It's difficult to prove any advantage for White, but on the other hand Black has no real counterplay and is playing 'only' for a draw. 7…♘a5 is the main move nowadays. Black aims at a Spanish-like pawn structure after 8.♗a2 c5. White has an easy plan at his disposal by pushing the b-pawn or exchanging the bishops on e6 and spoiling the black pawn structure if Black follows up with …♗e6.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6

This is the second main move here.

4.d3

The risky 4.♘g5 is a completely different story and not part of our work.

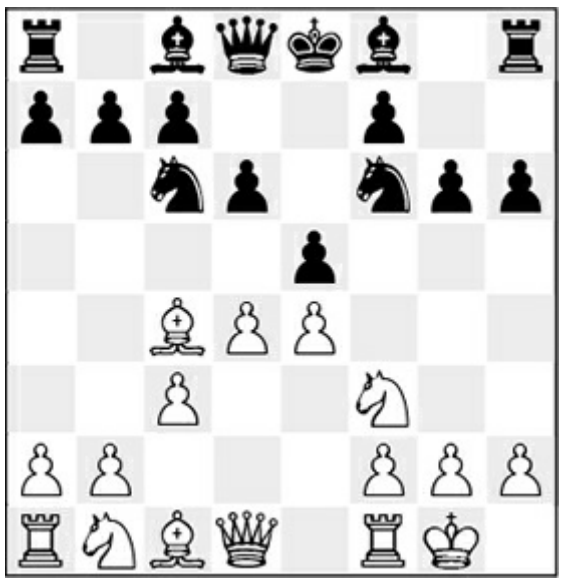
4…♗e7

By far the main move besides 4…♗c5. We will take a deep look at the position arising after White's 7th move, but first we analyse some minor black options.

A) **4…h6**

analysis diagram

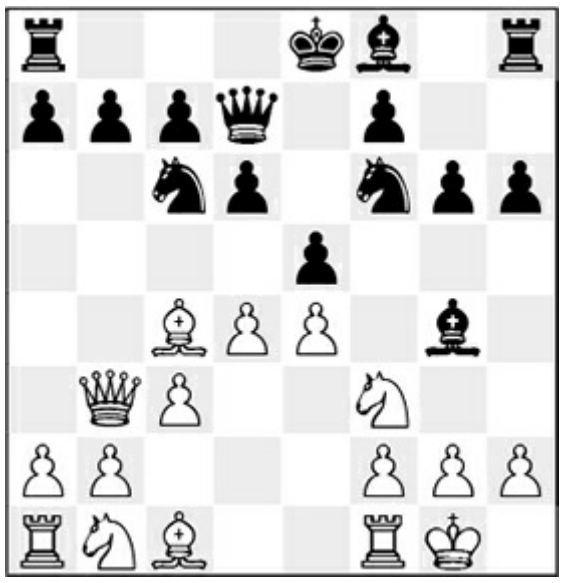
Black wants to develop his bishop to g7. This plan isn't as unsound as it may look. White should develop quickly and occupy the centre. **5.0-0 d6 6.c3 g6 7.d4!** 7.♖e1 is too slow: 7…♗g7 8.d4 0-0 9.h3 exd4 10.cxd4 d5! 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♘c3 ♗e6=.



analysis diagram

A1) **7…♗g7? 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 10.♘xe5 ♘xe4 11.♖e1 ♘d6?** 11…♗f5 12.g4! ♗xe5 13.gxf5 gxf5 14.f3 ♖g8+ 15.♔f1+–. **12.♘xf7+ ♔f8 13.♘xh8 ♘xc4 14.♘xg6++–** Womacka-Milchev, Guben 2011;

A2) **7…♗g4? 8.♕b3! ♕d7** 8…♘a5 9.♕a4+ c6 10.♗e2 b5 11.♕c2±.



analysis diagram

9.♗xf7+! ♕xf7 10.♕xb7 ♔d7 11.d5! ♘e7 12.♕xa8 ♘xe4 13.♘bd2+– Fedorchuk-Bednarek, Warsaw Ech 2005;

A3) 7…♘d7?! 8.dxe5! ♘dxe5 9.♘xe5 ♘xe5 10.♗b3 ♗g7 11.f4 ♘c6 (Rojo Gomez-Candela Perez, Spain tt 2000) 12.f5!N and Black is in trouble as he cannot castle;

A4) There are very few games with 7…♘xe4. A simple line is 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♗d5 ♗f5 10.♖e1 ♘c5 11.♗xc6+ bxc6 12.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 13.♘xe5 ♗e6 14.♘xc6±;

A5) **7…exd4 8.cxd4 ♗g7 9.♘c3 0-0** Black is threatening 10…♘xe4. **10.d5! ♘e7** 10…♘a5 11.♗d3 c5 12.h3 a6 13.♗f4 b5 14.♕d2 ♔h7 (Haik-Arkhipov, Sochi 1985) 15.♖fe1!N ♗b7 16.♖ad1±. **11.♖e1** 11.h3 c6 12.dxc6 bxc6 (Milliet-Payen, France tt 2004) 13.♖e1!N d5 14.exd5 cxd5 15.♗d3 is also a bit better for White. **11…a6** (Korneev-Malaniuk, Sochi 2012) **12.♘d4!N g5 13.f3 c5 14.dxc6 bxc6 15.♗e3±** White has the better pawn structure and nicely placed pieces.

A6) **7…♕e7** This is the main move, as Black cannot afford to let White open up the position. **8.♘bd2** 8.♖e1 ♗g7 9.♘bd2 is the same. **8…♗g7 9.♖e1 0-0 10.h3**

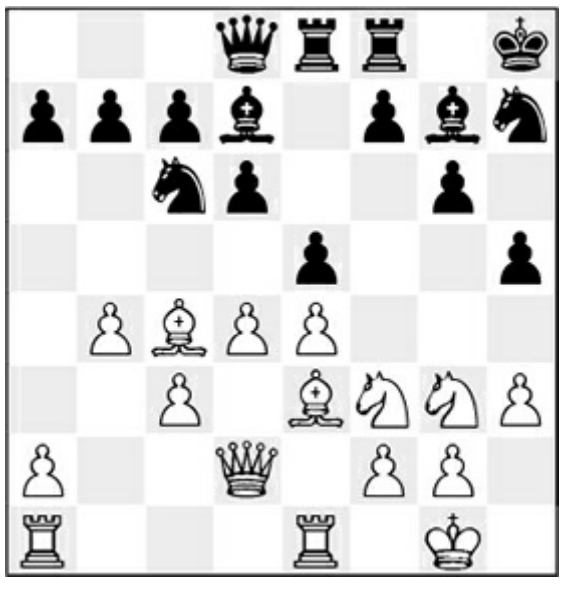
analysis diagram

This is an important position. We will give an overview of the most common moves and plans.

A61) 10…♘h7 (Black wants to exchange a piece via g5, but this damages Black's pawn structure) 11.♘f1 ♘g5 (Heberla-Marholev, Plovdiv Ech 2008) 12.♘xg5!N hxg5 13.d5 ♘d8 14.♗d3 f5 15.♘e3±. Whereas White has good prospects on the queenside by pushing the pawns, Black's kingside approach seems dubious;

A62) 10…♘h5 11.♘f1 ♗d7 12.♘e3 ♖ae8 (Neelotpal-Adhiban, Chennai 2008) 13.♘d5!N ♕d8 14.g4 ♘f6 15.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16.d5 ♘d8 17.g5 ♕e7 18.gxh6 ♗f6 19.♗f1±;

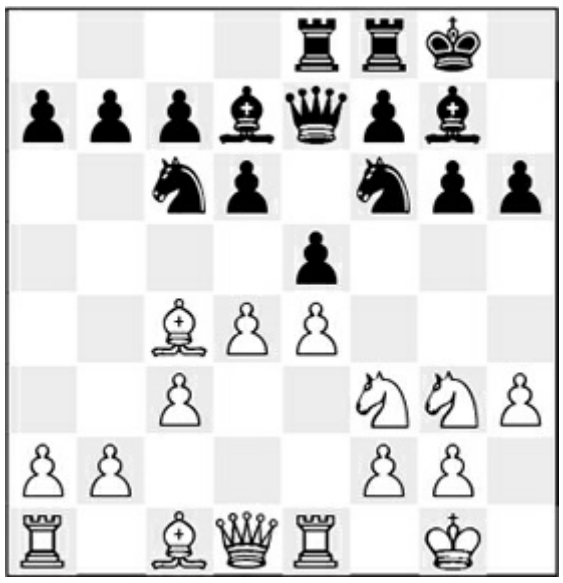
A63) **10…♔h8** is slow. White increases his control of the centre and enjoys a space advantage: **11.♘f1 exd4** 11…♗d7 12.♘g3 ♘h7 13.♗e3 ♖ae8 (13…♘g5 14.♘xg5 hxg5 15.♕d2±) 14.♕d2 h5 15.b4 ♕d8 (Bologan-Halkias, Plovdiv Ech 2008; 15…h4 16.♘e2 exd4 17.cxd4 ♕xe4 18.♗d3 ♕e7 19.b5 ♘b8 20.♘f4 ♕d8 21.a4± is way too passive)



analysis diagram

16.♖ad1!N h4 17.♘e2 exd4 18.cxd4 ♖xe4 19.b5 ♘e7 (19…♘b8 20.♘c3 ♖ee8 21.♗g5 ♘xg5 22.♘xg5 ♔g8 23.♖xe8 ♗xe8 24.♕f4+–) 20.♘c3 ♖xe3 21.♕xe3±. **12.cxd4 ♘xe4** (Narayanan-Ismagambetov, Gurgon 2009) **13.d5!N ♘b4 14.a3 ♘a6 15.♘g3 ♘ac5 16.♖a2 f5 17.b4 ♘d7 18.♖c2 ♘df6 19.♘d4 ♕d8 20.♘xe4 ♘xe4 21.♗b2** with overwhelming compensation for the pawn due to the active pieces and attacking changes against the black king;

A64) **10…♗d7 11.♘f1 ♖ae8 12.♘g3**



analysis diagram

The main line of this complex, but Black has problems as these examples show:

A641) 12…♔h7 13.a3 ♘g8 14.b4 a6 15.♗e3 ♗c8 16.♕d2 ♕f6 17.♗e2 ♖d8 18.♖ad1± Bologan-Bronstein, Oslo 1994;

A642) 12…♔h8 13.♗d3 ♘h7 14.d5 ♘d8 15.♕c2 h5 16.♗d2 h4 17.♘f1 f5 18.c4 c5 19.b4 cxb4 20.♗xb4 b6 (Fougerit-Koziak, France tt 2015; 20…♘f7 21.c5±) 21.exf5!N gxf5 22.♘xe5 ♗xe5 23.♖xe5!+–;

A643) 12…♕d8 13.♗d3 (there are more games with 13.♗b3, but it makes a lot of sense to put the bishop immediately on the b1-h7 diagonal in order to prepare further development with ♗e3 and ♕d2) 13…♘h7 14.♗e3 exd4 15.cxd4 ♘g5 16.♘xg5 hxg5 17.♗e2 ♕f6 18.d5 ♘d4 19.♗g4 ♗xg4 20.hxg4 c5?! (20…♕e5 21.♕d2 ♗f6 22.♖ed1 c5 23.dxc6 ♘xc6 24.♖ab1±) 21.♕d2 ♗h6 22.♖ac1 ♖e7 23.b4 b6 24.♖ed1 ♕h8 (24…♕e5 25.♖c4±) 25.f3 ♗g7 26.♗xg5± Amin-Arencibia Rodriguez, Al-Ain 2015.

A65) **10…♕d8 11.♗b5!? ♘d7** 11…exd4 12.cxd4± leaves White with a nice centre but is probably the best option for Black; 11…♖e8 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♕a4± with the better pawn structure was the idea of 11.♗b5; 11…♗d7?! costs a pawn after 12.♗xc6 ♗xc6 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♘xe5 e.g. 14…♗xe4 15.♘xe4 ♕xd1 16.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 17.♖xd1 ♗xe5 18.♗xh6±.

analysis diagram

12.♘c4 exd4 13.cxd4 a6 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♗f4 ♘b6?! 15…c5 16.♕d2 g5 17.♗g3±. **16.♘a5 ♗d7 17.♖c1 g5 18.♗g3 f5** (Armas-Stanciu, Predeal 1988) **19.♘xc6!N ♗xc6 20.♖xc6±**

B) **4…d6?!**

analysis diagram

A typical mistake usually made by amateur players. **5.♘g5! d5** This is a well-known position with the additional move d2-d3 for White! **6.exd5 ♘xd5** 6...♘a5 7.0-0 ♘xc4 (7...h6 8.♘f3 e4 9.♖e1 ♗e7 10.♘d4±) 8.dxc4 h6 9.♘f3 e4 10.♖e1 ♗e7 11.♘d4 0-0 12.h3± Movsesian-Vokac, Hustopece rapid 2010; 6...b5 7.♗xb5 (7.dxc6 bxc4 8.dxc4 ♕xd1+ 9.♔xd1±) 7...♕xd5 8.♗xc6+ ♕xc6 9.♕f3 ♗b7 (9...♕xc2?! 10.♘c3 ♗c5? (10...♖b8 11.♕c6+ ♗d7 12.♕xc7 ♖c8 13.♕xe5+ ♗e7 14.0-0 ♕xd3 15.♗f4±) 11.♕c6+ ♘d7 12.♘ge4 ♗d4 13.♕xa8+– Navarro-Kizov, Plovdiv tt 2010) 10.0-0 ♕xf3 11.♘xf3 ♗xf3 12.gxf3±. **7.♘c3!** With the pawn on d2 this move isn't possible, but now it just leads to a big advantage. **7...♗e6 8.♘xe6 fxe6 9.♘e4±** White has the bishop pair and the better pawn structure.

C) **4...d5?!** is dubious as White gets a lead in development after **5.exd5 ♘xd5 6.0-0**. We give some sample lines:

C1) **6...♗e7 7.♖e1 f6 8.h3 ♘b6** 8...0-0 9.♘c3 ♗e6 10.d4 ♗f7 11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 12.dxe5 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 fxe5 14.♕e4±. **9.♗b3 ♗f5** (Odeev-Buker, Adana 2006) 9...♘a5? 10.♘xe5!+– fxe5 11.♕h5+ ♔d7 12.♕xe5 ♘xb3 13.♗g5 ♖e8 14.♕e6# Conquest-Durao, Thessaloniki 1988. **10.a4!N a5 11.d4 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 ♕xd4 13.♕f3 ♗d7 14.♕xb7 ♕c5 15.♕f3 ♕c6 16.♕g3 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 ♕xe6 18.♕xg7 0-0-0 19.♕g4±**;

C2) **6...♗c5 7.♖e1 0-0 8.♘xe5 ♕h4** 8...♘xe5 9.♖xe5 ♗xf2+ (9...c6 10.♕f3 ♗e6 11.♘d2 ♗b6 12.a3! ♗c7 13.♖e1±) 10.♔xf2 ♕h4+ 11.♔f1 ♕f6+ 12.♕f3 ♕xe5 13.♗xd5 c6 14.♗b3 ♕xh2 15.♗e3± Tischbierek-Donev, Liechtenstein 1995. The two pieces are more worth than a rook and a pawn, and the white king isn't really under attack.

analysis diagram

9.♘f3! ♕xf2+ 10.♔h1 ♘f6 11.♖e2 ♘g4 12.c3 b5 12...♘a5 13.h3 ♕g3 14.hxg4 ♘xc4 15.dxc4 ♗xg4 16.♕e1!±. **13.♗d5 ♗b7 14.♘bd2!** Black cannot avoid material loss. **14...**

♖**ae8 15.**♘**e4** ♕**xe2 16.**♕**xe2** ♘**f2+ 17.**♕**xf2!** ♗**xf2 18.**♘**xf2+–** Dyakov-Ibar, IECG email 2002;

C3) **6…**♗**g4 7.h3** ♗**h5 8.**♖**e1** ♗**e7** 8…♕d6 9.♘bd2 0-0-0 10.♘e4 ♕g6? (10…♕d7 11.♗b5 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 f6 13.c3 ♔b8 14.a4 a6 15.♗c4 ♘b6 16.♗b3± with the bishop pair White's prospects on the queenside are more realistic than Black's on the kingside; 16…♕xd3 is problematic because of 17.♗e3↑ with multiple threats) 11.g4 ♗xg4 12.hxg4 ♕xg4+ (Neelotpal-Lokesh, Bhubaneswar 2014) 13.♘g3!N h5 14.♘g5 ♕d7 15.♕f3 f6 16.♕xd5 ♕xd5 17.♗xd5 ♖xd5 18.♘f3±. **9.g4** ♗**g6 10.**♘**xe5** ♘**xe5 11.**♖**xe5** ♘**b6 12.**♗**b3 0-0 13.**♘**c3** ♔**h8 14.**♕**f3 f5** (Gallagher-Halkias, Budva Ech 2009) 14…♘d7 15.♖e2 f5 (Cubas-Santos, Brazil tt 2011) 16.♕xb7!N fxg4 17.hxg4 ♗d6 18.♕g2 ♕h4 19.♘b5 ♘e5 20.♗d5 ♖ab8 21.♘xd6 cxd6 22.♕g3±; 14…♗d6 15.♖e1 f5 16.g5 f4 17.h4 ♘d7 18.d4 c5 19.♘e4 ♕a5 20.c3 ♖ae8 21.♗d2± Karibaeva-Egorova, Satka jr 2005.

analysis diagram

15.♕**xb7!N fxg4 16.hxg4** ♕**d4 17.**♖**e2** ♕**xg4+ 18.**♕**g2** ♕**h4 19.**♗**d2** ♗**c5 20.**♖**f1±** Objectively Black does not have enough compensation for the pawn, even if the white king is a bit exposed.

D) 4…♗c5 5.c3 leads to other chapters of this book.

5.0-0 0-0

Sometimes Black postpones castling and plays **5…d6** first. The move order can be tricky but it's hard to see any benefit of this approach for Black, as the best he can get seems to be a transposition to the main line. On the other hand White gets additional possibilities.

6.a4 Of course. We need the square a2 for the bishop immediately now. **6…0-0** For 6…♘a5 and other tries, take a look at the game Nevednichy-Halkias, Alba Iulia 2016, in the Strategy chapter. Things don't change much for White since, as we mentioned, he gets only additional options. **7.**♖**e1** transposes to the main line, but in this move order White doesn't need to place the rook immediately on e1. Instead he can try **7.a5!?**, which avoids the main black option 7…♘a5.

The problem with this line is that White cannot force it. So we included some analysis of this sub-line in the game Howell-Sowray, England tt 2015/16, in the Strategy chapter. This game features the line 6.a4!?.

6.♖e1

The main move, and our recommendation. White prevents the central advance 6…d5.

6.a4!? is a very interesting alternative for White, with the idea of postponing ♖e1 and avoiding the main line 7…♘a5. Please take a closer look at the game Howell-Sowray, England tt 2015/16, in the Strategy chapter.

6...d6 7.a4

Again the main move and also our recommendation. With this, White gains space and secures a nice spot on a2 for his bishop. 7.c3 allows a transposition to the Ruy Lopez after the moves 7...♘a5 8.♗b5 a6 9.♗a4 b5 10.♗c2 c5.

7...♘a5

A) **7...♗g4** This move could even be considered questionable. If Black places his bishop on the kingside then White's bishop on c4 gains strength. In addition, White wins tempi by attacking the bishop with natural moves. The following lines show that White has the better prospects. **8.h3 ♗h5** 8...♗xf3 9.♕xf3 ♘d7 (9...♘d4 10.♕d1 c6 11.c3 ♘e6 12.♗a2 ⩲) 10.a5 ♗g5 (Antoniewski-Beliavsky, Austria Bundesliga 2010/11) 11.♗xg5!N ♕xg5 12.c3 ♘e7 13.b4⩲. **9.c3** and now:

A1) **9...d5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.a5!**

analysis diagram

A11) **11...♕d6?! 12.♘bd2 ♖ad8 13.♘e4 ♕d7?!** 13...♕e6 14.♘fg5 ♗xg5 15.♘xg5 ♗xd1 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♖xd1⩲. **14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♕xh5 ♘xc4 16.dxc4 ♘f6 17.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18.a6 b6 19.♕f3⩲** Bauer-Petakov, Cannes 2010;

A12) 11...♖b8 12.♘bd2 f6 13.♘f1 ♔h8 14.♘g3 ♗f7 15.♗d2 ♖e8 16.b4 ♗f8 17.♕b3⩲ Zidu-Leisebein, Remote email 2014;

A13) **11...a6 12.♘bd2** 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 is risky as Black gets counterplay on the kingside. **12...♔h8** 12...♖b8 13.♘f1 (13.♘e4⩲ seems even more precise) 13...f6?! (13...♕d6 14.♘g3 ♗g6 15.♗d2⩲) 14.♘g3 ♗f7 (Marcelin-Veys, France tt 2015) 15.d4!N exd4 16.♘xd4 ♘e5 17.♘df5! ♘xc4 18.♕g4 g6 19.♘h6+ ♔h8 20.♕xc4⩲. **13.♘e4 f6 14.♕b3 ♗xf3 15.♗xd5 ♗h5 16.♗e3 ♖b8 17.♗c5 ♗e8 18.♕c4 ♗d6** 18...h6 19.d4⩲. **19.d4⩲** Bologan-Naiditsch, Kallithea tt 2008;

A2) **9...a5!? 10.♘bd2 ♘d7** 10...d5? 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♕b3 ♘b6 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♗g6 15.d4 ♗d6 16.♖e1 ♖e8 17.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 18.♗f1!⩲ Gallagher-K.Georgiev,

Zurich 2013. **11.♘f1 ♘b6 12.♗b3 ♔h8 13.g4 ♗g6 14.♘g3±** Karpatchev-Junker, Frankfurt 2014;

A3) **9...♔h8?! 10.♘bd2** 10.a5 first seems more precise. **10...♕d7 11.a5 a6 12.♘f1 ♖ae8 13.♘g3 ♗g6 14.♘h4 ♘g8 15.♘xg6+ fxg6 16.♗e3±** Svetushkin-Moiseev, Moscow 2009;

A4) **9...♕d7 10.♘bd2 a6** 10...♖ad8 11.a5 a6 (11...♘b8?! 12.♘f1 b5 13.axb6 axb6 (Haslinger-Evengroen, Dieren 2015) 14.♘g3!N ♗g6 15.♘h4±) 12.♘f1 ♖fe8 13.♘g3 ♗g6 14.♕b3 ♘h5 15.♘f5 ♗f8? (15...♖b8 16.♘5h4±) 16.♘5h4 ♘f4 17.♗xf4 exf4 18.♘xg6 hxg6 19.d4 ♖b8 20.e5+– Reefat-Ayyad, Doha 2006. **11.♘f1 ♗g6 12.♘h4 d5 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.a5 ♗c5 16.♘g3 ♘f6 17.b4 ♗a7 18.♗g5±** Salgado Lopez-Yaremko, Herceg Novi jr 2006.

B) **7...h6** The idea here is that Black wants to exchange pieces via the square g5. This is a somewhat 'lazy' approach that leaves White with a more pleasant position. **8.a5 a6 9.c3 ♘h7 10.♘bd2** We prefer this clear plan over the alternative move 10.♗e3, which is playable as well of course, and indeed is actually played slightly more often.

analysis diagram

10...♘g5 10...♔h8 11.d4 exd4 (11...♘g5 (Van Weersel-Szczepkowska Horowska, Warsaw 2012) 12.d5!N ♘b8 13.♘xg5 ♗xg5 14.♗d3 f5 15.c4±) 12.cxd4 f5 13.d5 ♘e5 14.♘xe5 dxe5 (Delchev-Bologan, France tt 2006) 15.exf5!N ♗xf5 16.♘f3 e4 17.♘d4 ♗b4 18.♗d2 ♗c5 19.♗e3±. **11.♘f1 ♗g4** 11...♘xf3+ 12.♕xf3 ♗g5 (Vajda-Roussel Roozmon, Budapest 2007) 13.♗xg5!N ♕xg5 14.♘e3 ♗e6 15.b4±. **12.♗xg5 ♗xg5 13.h3 ♗d7 14.♘xg5 ♕xg5 15.♖e3 ♗e6 16.♖g3 ♕f6 17.♘e3 ♔h7 18.♖f3 ♕d8 19.♕b3 ♗xc4 20.dxc4±** Sulskis-Beinoras, Vilnius 2014;

C) **7...♔h8** This initiates a dangerous plan. Black wants to play ...♘g8 and ...f7-f5 with counterplay on the kingside. White has to be careful. **8.a5** is an important move as it threatens 9.a6 and takes away the black option to play ...♘a5 along with ...c7-c5. **8...a6** 8...♘g8?! seems dubious because of 9.a6 b6 (9...f5 10.axb7 ♗xb7 11.♘c3 ♘b4 (Bitoon-Handoko, Tagaytay City 2004) 12.♗e6!±) 10.♗d5 ♗d7 11.b4± but this has never been played. 9.♘c3 is a good move against 9...♘g8 with the idea of following with 10.♘d5, but Black plays 9...♗g4! 10.h3 ♗h5 and the pin is extremely annoying. 11.g4? doesn't work because of 11...♘xg4! 12.hxg4 ♗xg4–+. The threats 13...♘d4 or 13...f5 are decisive. Therefore, **9.h3!** is a nice waiting move, taking control of the square g4. White is now ready to play 10.♘c3.

analysis diagram

9…♘g8 9…♗e6 10.♘bd2± is a better version for White compared to the lines presented after 7…♗e6. 7…♔h8 doesn't make much sense now. But strictly speaking a loss of tempo is not a big deal in such a position. **10.♘c3 f5 11.♘d5**

analysis diagram

This is a very important position that you need to remember. You should look carefully to the following lines. White is better in our opinion, but there is some very concrete play you need to memorize:

C1) **11…fxe4 12.dxe4 ♘f6** and now:

C11) **13.♘g5** is tempting but doesn't seem to work: **13…♘xd5 14.♘xh7 ♘f4?** 14…♖f4! 15.♕xd5 (Fedorov-Murtazin, Kazan 2014; 15.g3 ♕e8 16.♕xd5 (Sikula-Marzolo, Nancy 2007) 16…♔xh7!N 17.gxf4 ♘d4 18.f5 ♗e6! 19.♕xe6 ♘xe6 20.♗xe6 ♕c6∞) 15…♘b4!N 16.♕d2 d5! 17.♗f1 ♗c5 18.♖e2 ♕h4 19.c3 ♗g4! 20.hxg4 ♘d3 21.♕xd3 ♗xf2+ 22.♖xf2 ♕xf2+ 23.♔h2 ♕h4+=. **15.♘xf8 1-0** Rombaldoni-Timmermans, Hoogeveen 2010;

C12) **13.c3** is good, with the idea of slowly pushing the pawns on the queenside: 13…♗e6 14.♗a2 ♗g8 15.b4 ♘xd5 (15…h6 16.♗d2±) 16.exd5 ♘b8 17.♗e3 ♗f7 18.♕d2 ♘d7 19.♘g5 ♗xg5 20.♗xg5 ♕e8 21.♖ac1 ♗g6 22.c4± Eife-Forsti, ICCF email 2012;

C13) **13.♖a3!? ♘xd5?!** 13…♗e6±. **14.exd5 ♘b8 15.♗d3 ♘d7 16.c4 ♘c5 17.♗c2 ♗f5** (Howell-Pavlidis, Vung Tau City jr 2008) **18.♗xf5!N ♖xf5 19.♗e3 ♘d7 20.♖b3±**

C2) 11…h6 12.b4 fxe4 13.dxe4 ♗e6 14.♗d2 ♗f7 15.♖a3 ♗h5 16.♗e2 ♗g6 17.♖e3 ♘f6 18.♗c4 ♗h5 (Vocaturo-Espinosa Veloz, Havana 2011) 19.c3!N ♘h7 20.♗e2 ♗f7 21.♕c1±;

C3) **11…♘f6!?** There are only two games that have been played with this move, but the lines that it introduces are very tricky, so you have to be well prepared. **12.♘g5! ♘g8** 12…

♘xd5? 13.♘xh7! is the point: 13...♘f6 (13...♔xh7?? 14.♕h5+ ♔g8 15.♗xd5++–) 14.♘xf6 g6 15.♘d5±; 12...fxe4 13.♘xf6 ♖xf6 14.♘f7+ ♖xf7 15.♗xf7 exd3 16.♕xd3±. **13.♕h5** If your opponent is Magnus Carlsen you can of course choose to repeat moves with 13.♘f3=. **13...♘h6 14.c3 f4 15.♘xe7 ♕xe7** (Bojkov-Radulski, Greece tt 2009) **16.g3!N** This looks very dangerous for White, but in fact it is a very logical move. You can check the lines for yourself:

analysis diagram

C31) **16...♗d7 17.♗d2 ♕f6** 17...♖f6 18.gxf4 exf4 19.d4±. **18.gxf4** 18.♔h1 ♗e8 (18...fxg3?! 19.fxg3 ♕f2 20.♖e2 ♕xg3 21.♖g2 ♗e8 22.♘f7+! ♗xf7 23.♗xf7 ♕xd3 24.♗xh6 gxh6 25.♖e1! ♘e7 26.♖ee2 ♖g8 27.♗xg8 ♖xg8 28.♕xh6+–) 19.♕h4 fxg3 20.♕xg3 ♕xf2 21.♕xf2 ♖xf2 22.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 23.♖xf1 ♗g6 24.b4⩲. **18...exf4 19.d4 ♗e8 20.♕h4 ♘e7 21.♘f3 ♕xh4 22.♘xh4 ♗h5 23.♔g2±**;

C32) **16...♘d8 17.♕h4** 17.gxf4 exf4 18.♗d2 ♗e6 19.♘xe6 ♘xe6∞. **17...♕f6 18.gxf4 exf4 19.d4 ♗e6 20.♗f1±**;

C33) **16...♖f6 17.♕h4 ♖g6** 17...♗d7 18.gxf4 exf4 19.d4 ♖af8 20.♔h1 ♖f5 (20...♘d8 21.♗d2 ♗e6 22.♘xe6 ♘xe6 23.e5 dxe5 24.dxe5 ♖6f7 25.♕xe7 ♖xe7 26.♖ad1±) 21.♖g1 ♖xa5 (21...♘xa5 22.exf5 ♘xc4 23.b3 ♘b6 24.c4±) 22.♗xf4 ♖xa1 23.♖xa1 ♗xh3 24.♖g1±. **18.gxf4 exf4 19.♗xf4 ♘e5 20.♔h1 ♗xh3 21.♕xh3 ♖f8 22.♗e3 ♘xc4 23.dxc4 ♖xg5 24.♗xg5 ♕xg5 25.♖g1 ♕e7 26.f3±**

C4) **11...f4?!** There are only a few games with this move without the inclusion of ...a7-a5/...a7-a6. White gets an advantage with the typical reaction 1**2.d4!** e.g. **12...♗f6 13.b4 ♘xd4** 13...exd4 14.♗xf4±; 13...♗e6 14.c3±. **14.♘xd4 exd4 15.♗xf4 ♗e5 16.♗xe5** 16.♗g3 also leads to a much better position for White, but it's more complicated. **16...dxe5 17.c3 ♕h4** 17...dxc3 18.♕c2±. **18.♖a2 ♗e6 19.cxd4 ♖ad8 20.♖d2 exd4 21.g3 ♕xh3 22.♖xd4±**;

C5) **11...♗f6 12.b4!**

analysis diagram

12…fxe4 12…h6 13.♗b3 ♗d7 14.c3 ♘ge7 15.♘xf6 ♖xf6 16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.d4±; 12…f4 13.d4! ♗e6 14.c3±. **13.dxe4 ♘ce7 14.♖a3** 14.♘xf6 ♘xf6 15.♗f1 looks even better. White has the bishop pair and can push the queenside pawns, e.g. 15…♗e6 16.c4 ♕e8 17.b5 ♘d7 18.♗e3 ♘g6 19.bxa6 bxa6 20.c5 ♘xc5 21.♗xc5 dxc5 22.♖e3 c4 23.♕c2 ♕b5 24.♖c3 ♘f4 25.♘d2±. **14…♘xd5 15.exd5 ♘e7 16.♗f1 ♕e8 17.c4±** Eliseev-Lastin, Moscow 2012.

D) **7…♘d4** gives White better central control: **8.♘xd4 exd4 9.c3 dxc3 10.♘xc3**

analysis diagram

10…c6 10…♗e6 11.♕b3 ♕c8 (11…♗xc4 12.dxc4 b6 (Saric-Zelic, Zadar 2007) 13.a5!±) 12.d4 ♗xc4 13.♕xc4 c6 14.♕d3 ♕e6 (Gelfand-Sutovsky, Russia tt 2006) 15.♗d2!±. White enjoys a small plus due to his nice centre. **11.♕b3 ♘d7?!** 11…♘g4!? 12.d4 ♗h4 13.g3 ♕f6 14.♘d1!±; 11…c5 12.♗f4±. **12.d4 ♕a5 13.♗d2** 13.♗e3±. **13…♕h5 14.♘e2 ♘b6 15.♘f4 ♕h4 16.♗d3 g5** (Korneev-Mascaro March, Balaguer 2007) **17.a5!N gxf4 18.axb6 a6 19.♗c4±**;

E) **7…♗e6**

analysis diagram

This is a solid move which leads to quiet positions. Black wants to 'kill' the bishop on c4 but he also loses a lot of potential to get any counterplay. Generally speaking, in many lines White can push the b-pawn and gain some space advantage on the queenside. Taking on e6, to spoil Black's pawn structure, is also an idea in many cases. After that White can manoeuvre more freely. **8.♘bd2** 8.♘c3 is an interesting alternative with the idea of controlling the square d5. We cover this move in the game Z.Almasi-Harikrishna, Reggio Emilia 2007, in the Strategy chapter.

E1) **8...♗xc4** doesn't make much sense as White immediately gets his knight to the strong outpost c4: **9.♘xc4±** 9.dxc4 is also possible. There is an old game in which Michael Adams won convincingly against Alexander Onischuk. But Black can improve his play in many ways. **9...♖e8 10.♘f1** (Adams-Onischuk, Tilburg 1997) and here **10...a5N**, with the idea of 11...♘d7, looks perfectly playable for Black;

E2) **8...♘d7 9.a5** This move has rarely been played, but it makes a lot of sense. Otherwise Black could get a better version of the 7...a5 idea, e.g. if White opts for 9.c3. Besides, White increases his space advantage.

E21) **9...♗f6** (Barua-Nixon, Edinburgh 2003) **10.c3N** 10.a6N b6 11.c3±. **10...a6 11.b4±**;

E22) **9...♗g5** (Gershon-Blodstein, Givataim 1997) **10.a6!N b6 11.♗b5 ♗xd2** 11...♘d4!? 12.♘xd4 exd4 13.c3 c5 14.cxd4 cxd4 15.♘f3 ♗f6 16.♗d2 (16.b4?! ♘e5!) 16...♘c5 17.♗f4 (17.b4 ♘b3=) 17...♗g4 18.h3 ♘e6 19.♗d2 ♗h5 20.g4 ♗g6 21.♖c1 h5 22.♕g2±. **12.♗xd2 ♘e7 13.d4 c6 14.♗f1↑**;

E23) 9...b6 10.a6 ♗xc4 11.♘xc4 ♘d4 12.♘xd4 (12.b4 c6 13.c3 ♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 b5 15.♘a5 ♕b6±) 12...exd4 13.f4 d5±;

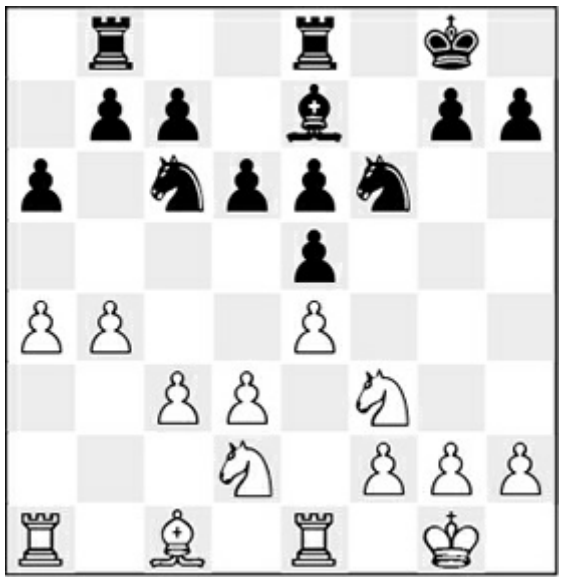
E24) **9...a6 10.c3 ♗g5** (Domont-Glauser, Zürich 2004) **11.♘xg5N** 11.b4N ♗xd2 12.♘xd2 ♕e7 13.♕b3 ♗xc4 14.♕xc4±. **11...♕xg5 12.b4 ♗xc4 13.♘xc4 ♕g6 14.f3 f5 15.♗e3±**

E3) **8...♕d7 9.c3**

analysis diagram

E31) **9…♖fe8 10.♕b3!?** 10.b4 a6 (Delchev-Ivanisevic, Vrsac 2006) 11.♕b3!?N ♘d8 (11…d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♘e4 (13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♖ad8=) 13…♖ad8 14.h3 f6 15.♗d2 ±) 12.a5 ♗xc4 13.♘xc4 ♘e6 14.h3 is a bit more pleasant for White due to the space advantage, but Black's position is very solid.

E311) 10…♖ab8 11.♗xe6 ♕xe6 12.♕xe6 fxe6 13.b4 a6.

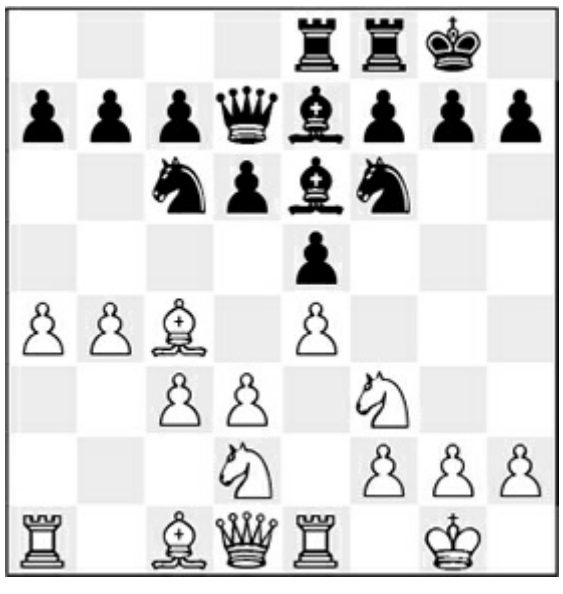


analysis diagram

Here I should not have rushed with 14.b5 in Souleidis-Zelbel, Erfurt 2015, which would have led to an equal position after 14…♘d8!. Instead, 14.♘b3! would have preserved all White's options. He brings his bishop into play and pushes his pawns on the queenside at a later stage. In contrast, Black has no counterplay at all here, e.g. 14…♖f8 15.h3 ♘d7 16.♗e3 ♖a8 17.b5 ♘d8 18.c4±;

E312) 10…d5! (unfortunately this move makes 10.♕b3 less attractive) 11.exd5 ♗xd5 12.♗xd5 ♘xd5 13.♘c4 (after the inferior 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♘f4 Black gets a lot of counterplay as White lacks development) 13…♗f6!= as capturing on b7 is very risky.

E32) **9…♖ae8** allows the rapid advance of White's b-pawn. With a rook on a8 Black can slow this down with …a7-a6. **10.b4!**



analysis diagram

10…h6 (Asgarizadeh-Ghosh, Györ ol jr 2014) 10…♗xc4 11.♘xc4 ♘d8 12.♕b3 ♘e6 (Stopa-Lehman, Concord 2011) 13.♘e3!N c6 14.♘f5±; 10…♗d8 11.a5 ♘e7 12.a6 b5 (Kovalev-Zeberski, Dresden 2008) 13.♗xe6!N ♕xe6 14.♘f1 c6 15.♗e3 ♘c8 16.♘g3 ♗b6 17.d4±; 10…♘d8, a computer suggestion with the idea of …♘xe6 if White exchanges bishops. 11.h3 c6 12.a5±. **11.♗xe6!N ♕xe6 12.♘f1 a6 13.♘g3**±;

E33) **9…h6 10.a5 10.b4** makes less sense with a rook on a8. Black plays **10…a6** and

threatens to play …d6-d5 or even …b7-b5: **11.♕b3** 11.♗b3 has been played more often but 11…♗xb3 12.♕xb3 (Hendriks-Haslinger, Hilversum 2009) 12…♖ab8!N looks equal. Here Black has not compromised his pawn structure in comparison with lines where White has exchanged the bishops on e6.

analysis diagram

E331) **11…♖fe8 12.♗xe6 fxe6** 12…♕xe6 13.♕xb7±. **13.♘c4** 13.d4 exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.cxd4 ♗f8 16.♘f3±. **13…♗f8 14.h3 ♖ab8** (Rabiega-Machelett, Germany Bundesliga 2001/02) 15.♕a4!?N ♕f7 16.b4±;

E332) **11…♘h5?! 12.d4** Look out for this advance, especially if Black has given up control of the square d5. **12…♗xc4 13.♘xc4 ♗f6** (Vogt-Boschetti, Brocco 1990) **14.♕d1!N ♕g4 15.♖a4±** with the idea d4-d5;

E333) **11…♖ab8 12.♘f1 ♖fe8** 12…♗xc4 13.dxc4 is possible, but this structure is a bit more pleasant for White as he has control of the central squares and can put his knight on d5 or f5. **13.♘e3 ♗f8** (Spasov-Kaidanov, Yerevan ol 1996) **14.♗xe6!N fxe6 15.♘c4±** is similar to Rabiega-Machelett.

E34) **9…♖ad8 10.b4! ♕c8** (Delchev-Beliavsky, Plovdiv Ech-tt 2003) 10…♖fe8 11.b5 ♘a5 12.♗xe6 fxe6 (Fedorov-Zelic, Croatia tt 2002) 13.c4!N c6 14.♗b2 ♕c7 15.♘g5 ♗f8 16.♗c3 h6 17.♘gf3±. **11.♗xe6!N ♕xe6 12.♘c4±** and b4-b5.

F) **7…a5** is a rare move, taking control of the square b4. The main idea is to bring the knight from f6 to c5. **8.h3!?** is a good waiting move taking control of the square g4, which is important in many lines.

analysis diagram

F1) **8…♗e6** (Kindermann-Graf, Germany Bundesliga 2012/13) **9.♘a3!N** The square c4 is a very good outpost for the knight. **9…♗xc4** 9…♘d7 10.c3 ♘b6 11.♗xe6 fxe6 12.♗e3±;

9…d5 10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♗xd5 ♕xd5 12.c4 ♕e6 13.d4↑. **10.♘xc4 ♘d7 11.c3 ♖e8** 11…♘c5?! 12.d4↑. **12.♗d2** The advance b2-b4 is in the air now. **12…♘f8 13.b4** 13.♘e3 ♘e6 14.♘d5±. **13…axb4 14.cxb4 ♘e6 15.b5 ♘cd4 16.♘xd4 ♘xd4 17.♗e3 ♘e6 18.♕g4±**;

F2) **8…♘d7 9.c3 ♔h8?!** (9…♘c5 10.d4 exd4 11.cxd4 ♘d7 12.♘c3±; 9…♗f6 10.♗e3 ♘c5 11.♘bd2±) was a strange mix of plans in Luciani-Borsos, Verona 2007. White could have obtained a better position with **10.♗e3N ♘c5** (10…f5?! 11.exf5 ♖xf5 12.♘a3±) **11.♘bd2±**

8.♗a2 c5

8…♗e6?! allows White to gain space on the queenside, e.g. **9.b4** 9.♗xe6N fxe6 10.b4 ♘c6 11.c3± seems even better. **9…♗xa2 10.♖xa2 ♘c6 11.c3±** Godena-Marguerettaz, Padova 2014.

9.c3 ♘c6

9…♗e6 allows a quick b2-b4: **10.♗xe6 fxe6 11.b4 cxb4 12.cxb4 ♘c6 13.b5 ♘d4 14.♘xd4** 14.♘bd2± might be even better. **14…exd4** (Hommeles-Boudre, France tt 2005) **15.♘d2!N e5 16.♘c4 ♖c8 17.♗a3** with a better position due to the pressure on d6 and better pawn structure.

10.♘a3

More precise and flexible than 10.♘bd2, which has been played more often, as it leaves d2 open for the bishop.

10…♗e6

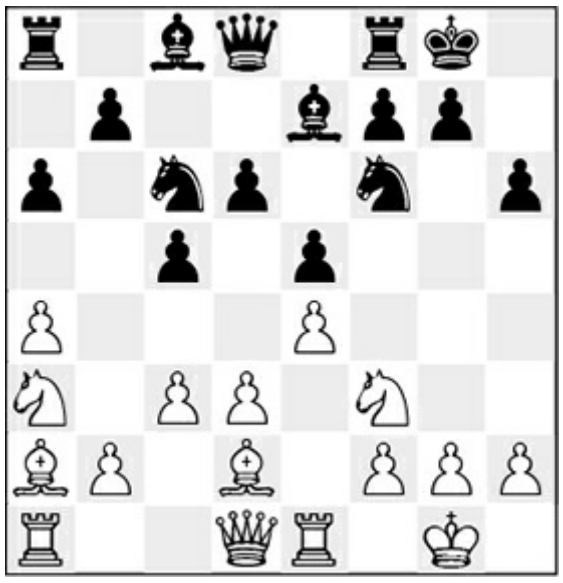
10…h6!? A logical waiting move. **11.♗d2**

A) 11…♘h7 (Kurmann-Petschar, Graz 2015) 12.b4!N cxb4 13.cxb4 ♘g5 14.♘xg5 ♗xg5 15.♗c3 a6 16.♗c4± White has a nice initiative on the queenside;

B) 11…♗e6?! (this doesn't fit with 10…h6) 12.♗xe6 fxe6 13.b4 b6 14.♘c4 ♕c7 15.♖c1 ♘d7 16.b5 ♘d8 17.d4 ♘f7 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.♕b3± Demchenko-Grünfeld, Jerusalem Ech 2015;

C) 11…♖e8 12.♘c2!? ♗f8 13.♘e3 ♗e6 14.♗xe6 ♖xe6 15.c4 a5 16.♖f1 ♖e8 17.♘e1 g6 18.f4± Olofsson-Buseman, corr. 2014;

D) **11…a6** An attempt to play on the queenside.



analysis diagram

12.h3!N A nice waiting move which improves the position on the kingside too.

D1) **12.♘c4** is premature and allows Black to put his light-squared bishop uncontested on his dream square e6: **12...♗e6!** and now: **13.h3** 13.b4 b5 14.♘e3 (Harikrishna-Yang Kaiqi, China tt 2012) 14...cxb4!N 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.cxb4 ♕d7=; the white knights don't really have prospects here. **13...♖e8 14.♕b1!? ♗f8 15.b4 b5! 16.♘e3 ♗xa2 17.♖xa2 cxb4 18.cxb4** (Udeshi-Panchanathan, New Delhi 2013) **18...bxa4!N** and no matter how White reacts, Black will play ...d6-d5 soon and equalise;

D2) 12.b4 doesn't work because of 12...cxb4 13.cxb4 d5!=;

D3) **12...♖b8 13.♘c4** and now:

D31) 13...b5 14.axb5 axb5 15.♘e3 ♖e8 16.♘h2.

analysis diagram

White starts attacking on the kingside. 16...♗e6 17.♗d5! ♕d7 18.♖a6 ♖ec8 19.♕f3 ♕b7 20.♖aa1 ♖a8 21.♘hg4 with a dangerous initiative on the kingside for White. Now Black cannot just trade rooks because this increases the pressure, e.g. 21...♖xa1 22.♖xa1 ♖a8?! 23.♖xa8+ ♕xa8 24.♘f5±;

D32) One could ask why not 13...♗e6 now? There is a slight difference. With the rook on b8 White can now play 14.b4! cxb4 15.cxb4. Let's see some lines:

D321) 15...d5 16.exd5 ♘xd5 17.b5 ♘cb4 18.♗b1!± and Black loses a pawn, as 18...f6?! doesn't work because of 19.d4±;

D322) 15...♘d7 16.b5 ♘d4 17.♘xd4 exd4 18.♗b4±;

D323) 15...b5?! runs into 16.axb5 axb5 17.♘a5!±. With the rook on a8 this idea doesn't work.

11.♗xe6!

It makes sense to damage the black pawn structure. 11.♘c4 has been played more often,

but we suppose more of psychological reasons as White fears the opening of the f-file. In our Strategy chapter we summarise some lines in the game Iordachescu-Saric, Halkidiki Ech tt 2011.

11...fxe6 12.♗d2

The latest try by one of the strongest exponents of the Slow Italian. White plans b4-b5 with a space advantage.

A) 12.b4?! immediately doesn't work because of 12...cxb4 13.cxb4 (Sikula-Borsos, Hungary tt 2005/06) 13...♘xb4!N 14.♕b3 d5 15.♘xe5 ♘c6 16.♘f3 ♗b4=;

B) **12.♘c4** generally leads to the same positions as after 12.♗d2:

B1) **12...♕d7 13.♗d2 ♖ac8 14.b4 cxb4 15.cxb4 ♘d4** 15...♘h5? 16.b5 ♘d8 (16...♘b8 17.♗e3 ♘f4 18.♗xa7±) 17.♗e3 ♖a8 (17...b6 18.♘fxe5 dxe5 19.♕xh5 ♕xd3 20.♘xe5 ♕xe4 21.♗xb6+–) 18.♘fxe5 dxe5 19.♕xh5 ♕xd3 20.♘xe5 ♕xe4 21.♗c5 ♕xe1+ 22.♖xe1 ♗xc5 23.♘d3+– Leon Hoyos-Arencibia, Santa Clara 2004. **16.♘xd4 exd4** (M.Muzychuk-Kashlinskaya, Plovdiv Ech W 2014)

analysis diagram

17.b5!N e5 17...d5?! 18.exd5 ♘xd5 19.♘e5 ♕e8 20.♕g4 ♖f5 21.♘c4 ♗c5 22.♕e4 ♖f6 23.♗g5 ♖f5 24.h4 h6 25.♗d2 ♖f6 26.♘e5± with the idea 27.♘g4. **18.♗b4±** with a similar position to that in Hommeles-Boudre;

B2) **12...♖c8** Here White has a choice:

B21) **13.♗d2 b6 14.♖b1** and now:

B211) 14...♘h5 15.b4 cxb4 16.cxb4 ♘f4 17.♗xf4 ♖xf4 18.b5 ♘d4 19.♘xd4 exd4 20.a5! ±;

B212) 14...♘d7 15.b4 cxb4 16.cxb4 ♕e8 17.♗c3±;

B213) **14...♖b8?! 15.b4 cxb4 16.cxb4 ♘d7 17.♗c3 b5** 17...a5 18.b5 ♘b4 19.♗xb4 axb4 20.♘e3±. **18.axb5 ♖xb5 19.♘a3 ♖b7** (Vocaturo-Geenen, Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011)

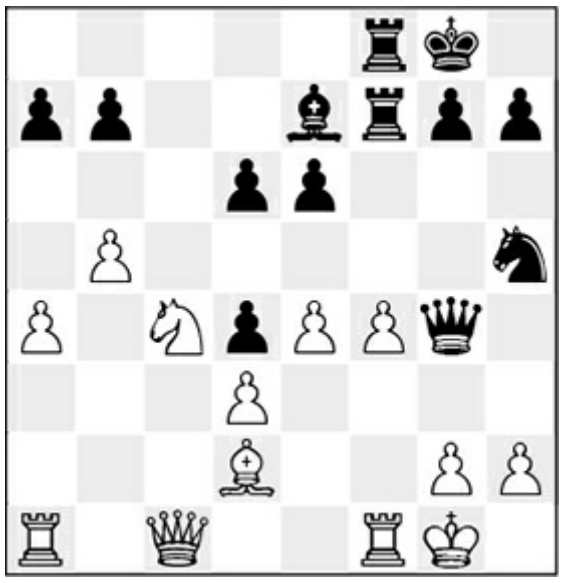
analysis diagram

20.b5!N ♘cb8 21.♘c4±

B22) **13.♖b1 ♘h5 14.b4 cxb4 15.cxb4 ♘f4 16.b5 ♘a5 17.♘xa5 ♕xa5** (Kapnisis-Petkov, Kavala 2007) **18.d4!N ♕c7** 18...exd4 19.♘xd4 ♘d3 20.♗d2 ♕c7 21.♘xe6 ♕c2 22.♖e2±. **19.♗e3±**

C) **12...♕e8 13.♗d2** The following two correspondence games were played with the help of computers. Both are very convincing and indicate that White is better in this position. They are very important games for understanding this position.

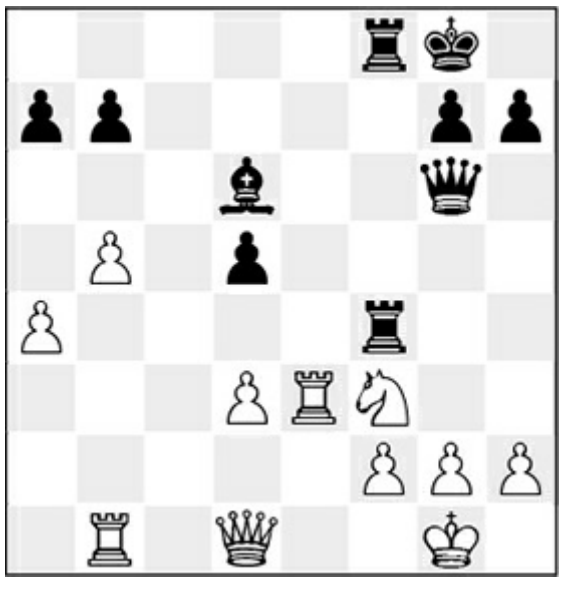
C1) 13...♘h5?! 14.b4 cxb4 15.cxb4 ♕g6 16.b5 ♘d4 17.♘xd4 exd4 18.♖f1 ♖f7 19.f4 ♖af8 20.♕c1! ♕g4



analysis diagram

21.f5! exf5 22.e5! ♕g6 (22...d5? is losing due to 23.e6 ♖f6 24.♘e5 ♕e2 25.♖e1+–) 23.♕e1 ♖d8 24.♗b4 ♗g5 25.exd6± Rada-Eremin, ICCF email 2014;

C2) 13...♘d7 14.b4 cxb4 15.cxb4 ♖c8 16.♗c3 d5 17.exd5 exd5 18.♘cxe5 ♘cxe5 19.♗xe5 ♘xe5 20.♖xe5 ♕f7 21.♖b1! ♗d6 22.♖e1 ♕g6 23.♖e3 ♖f4 24.b5 ♖cf8



analysis diagram

25.♖a1! (if White can play such a slow move then Black has literally nothing on the kingside) 25...♔h8 26.d4 ♕h6 27.g3 ♖e4 28.♖c3 ♕f6 29.♖a2 g6 30.♔g2 ♕f5 31.b6 a6 32.h4 h6 33.♘e5 ♗xe5 34.dxe5 d4 35.♖c4 ♕xe5 36.♖ac2 ♕d5 37.f3 ♖e3 38.♖xd4 ♕xf3+ 39.♕xf3 ♖exf3 40.♖c7 1-0 Achilles-Penkin, ICCF email 2011.

12...d5?!

Black sacrifices a pawn but objectively he doesn't get enough compensation. 12...♕e8 13.♘c4 see Rada-Eremin and Achilles-Penkin.

12...♖c8 13.♘c4 see Vocaturo-Geenen.

12...♕d7 13.♘c4 see Leon Hoyos-Arencibia and Muzychuk-Kashlinskaya.

13.exd5 exd5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♖xe5 ♗d6 16.♖e1 ♕d7 17.h3! a6 18.♘c2 ♕f5 19.♕e2

19.♖e3± might be even better.

19...♖ae8 20.♕f1 ♖d8

Saric-Bosiocic, Porec ch-CRO 2016.

21.b4!N ♘h5

21...b6 22.a5!±.

22.bxc5 ♗xc5 23.♘d4!

23.♗e3 ♕c8! 24.d4 ♗d6 25.♗g5 ♗g3 26.♖e2 ♖d7 27.♕d1 ♖df7 28.fxg3 ♖f1+ 29.♕xf1 ♖xf1+ 30.♖xf1 ♘xg3 31.♖ff2 ♘xe2+ 32.♖xe2 ♕xc3 33.♔f2 is better for White too, but it's not clear if it's enough to win the game.

23...♗xd4 24.cxd4 ♘f4 25.♖e3±

White has everything under control and is a pawn up. His next move will be to activate the rook on a1.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have dealt with the main line 3...♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 and some minor black options after 4.d3. Apart from 4...♗e7, only 4...h6 is of theoretical importance. With concrete play White conquers the centre and enjoys a space advantage. There seems to

be no line where Black can equalise. In the main line we took an extensive look at the position after 7.a4!. Black has many options. 7…♔h8 initiates a dangerous plan with the idea of attacking on the kingside, but we offer a convincing path to neutralise Black's idea and even get a promising position. 7…♗e6 is a very solid option for Black, but he lacks counterplay and White always has at least a more pleasant position. 7… ♘a5 is the main move, but White has a simple plan by exchanging the bishops on e6 and damaging Black's pawn structure. The examples shown are very convincing from White's perspective. The other main idea is to push the b-pawn in many lines and increase the space advantage.
All in all we are very convinced that the lines presented offer White very good play with almost no risk at all.

Chapter 4
Black plays …d7-d5

Against Black's strike in the centre with an early …d7-d5 we offer several options. Our main line leads to a slightly better endgame, and we also look at the new trend 8.a4, the very early ♘bd2, and 4.0-0 in the move order of Chapter 9.3, so that an early ♖e1 can prevent …d7-d5 for a longer time. But let us start with our main suggestion.

4.1 – The endgame

Our main suggestion is to go into an endgame with a slight initiative, but with very careful defence Black should be able to hold. Over the board, though, it is unpleasant to fend off White's initiative.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0

The direct 5…d5? runs into 6.exd5 ♘xd5 7.♕b3!

analysis diagram

7…0-0 (7…♘a5 8.♕b5++–; 7…♗e6 8.♕xb7 ♘de7 9.♗xe6 fxe6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♕a6+–) 8.♗xd5 ♘a5 9.♕d1 ♕xd5 10.b4 e4 11.dxe4 ♕xe4+ 12.♕e2 ♕xe2+ 13.♔xe2 ♖e8+ 14.♔f1±.

6.0-0 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♖e1

This is the critical move, as White immediately attacks the pawn on e5. We will also offer a second interesting option with 8.a4.

8…♗g4!

The most principled continuation. The alternatives are weaker:

A) **8…♘b6** should be met by **9.♗g5!**. This rarely played move leads to a White advantage. **9…♗e7** 9…♕d6 10.♘bd2 (10.b4 ♘xc4 11.bxc5 ♕g6 12.dxc4 e4! is not entirely clear) 10…♘xc4 (10…♕g6 11.♘e4 ♘xc4 12.dxc4 ♗b6 13.♘h4 ♕e6 14.c5 h6 15.♗e3 f5 16.cxb6 axb6 17.♘d2 f4 18.a3 fxe3 19.♖xe3 ♕f7 20.♘hf3± with a better pawn structure) 11.♘xc4 ♕g6 12.♘cxe5 ♘xe5 13.♖xe5 ♕b6 14.♗h4 f6 15.♖e2±; 9…♕d7!? 10.♗b3 ♖e8 11.a4 a5 12.♗h4 ♗d6 13.♘bd2 h6 14.♘e4 ♗f8 15.h3 ♘d5 16.d4!±

analysis diagram

16…exd4? (Rakowiecki-Gawronski, Lodz 1997) 17.♗xd5!N ♕xd5 18.♘f6+ gxf6 19.♖xe8 ♕d7 20.♖xf8+! ♔xf8 21.♕d2 ♔g7 22.♗xf6+!+–. **10.♗xe7 ♕xe7 11.♗b5 f6 12.♗xc6 bxc6**

analysis diagram

13.♘bd2 13.d4 e4 14.♘bd2 f5 15.♘e5 c5 16.♘b3 cxd4 17.cxd4± could be even better. **13…♕f7 14.♘e4 ♗g4 15.h3 ♗h5 16.♘g3**± Podinic-Danilovic, Subotica jr 2000;

B) **8…♖e8?! 9.d4!** With this typical move White wins a pawn.

analysis diagram

9…♗b6 9…exd4?? 10.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 11.♗xd5+–. **10.dxe5 ♗e6 11.♘g5 ♘f4** 11…♘e3 12.♕xd8 ♘xd8 13.♗xe3 ♗xc4 14.♘d2 ♗d5 15.c4 ♗c6 16.f4 f6 17.♗xb6 fxg5 (17…axb6 18.exf6 ♖xe1+ 19.♖xe1 gxf6 20.♘ge4±) 18.♗xc7 ♘e6 19.♗d6 ♘xf4 20.g3 ♘h3+

21.♔f1 ♖ad8 22.♘b3 g4 23.♘d4±. **12.♕xd8 ♖axd8 13.♘xe6 ♘xe6 14.♘a3±**;

C) 8...♗e6 9.♘bd2 ♗d6 10.♘e4 h6 11.a4 ♖e8 12.b4± with a typical space advantage and nice piece placement.

9.♘bd2 ♘b6 10.h3 ♗h5

10...♘xc4 11.♘xc4 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♗d6 13.b4 a6 14.a4 ♕d7 15.♕d5 ♖fe8 16.♗d2 ♕e6 17.♕xe6 ♖xe6 18.b5 gives White a slight edge.

11.b4!?

11.♗b5 is the main move, but Black always has counterplay after 11...♗d6 12.♘e4 f5. So we suggest this sideline to head for an endgame, as in our main line.

11...♗e7

11...♗d6?! 12.♗b3 and now:

A) **12...a5 13.b5 ♘b8** 13...♘e7 14.a4 ♔h8 (Pruijssers-Ernst, Amsterdam ch-NED 2013) 15.d4!N exd4 16.♘e4 dxc3 17.♘xd6 cxd6 18.g4 ♗g6 19.♗a3. White has the only active pieces and Black is defending by the skin of this teeth, for example: 19...♘ec8 20.♕d4 c2 21.♖ac1 ♘d7 22.♗xc2 ♗xc2 23.♖xc2±. **14.a4 ♘8d7 15.♘e4 ♗e7 16.d4! exd4 17.♕xd4 ♗xf3 18.gxf3 c5 19.bxc6 bxc6 20.♗f4 ♘d5 21.♗xd5 cxd5 22.♕xd5±** Eliseev-Najer, Moscow 2013;

B) 12...♔h8 13.♘e4 f6 (13...f5 14.♘g3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♕f6 16.♗d2±) 14.a4 a6 15.♘g3 ♗f7 16.♗xf7 ♖xf7 17.♕b3 ♕g8 18.a5 ♘d7± (Vocaturo-Godena, Sarre ch-ITA 2009) 19.♗d2!?N, with the idea of following up with c3-c4 and ♗c3, looks good for White.

12.b5

After 12.♗b3!? ♕xd3 13.♘xe5 ♗xd1 14.♘xd3 ♗xb3 15.axb3

analysis diagram

Black must find 15...a6! to equalise: (15...♖fd8? 16.b5+–) 16.♘e4 ♘d5 17.♘f4 ♖ad8

18.♘xd5 ♖xd5 19.♗f4 ♖d7=.

One recent idea is 12.♕e2 ♘xc4 13.♘xc4 f6 14.b5 ♘b8 15.d4 a6 from Vocaturo-Hammer, Gjakova Ech 2016, and now 16.b6!?N cxb6 17.dxe5 b5 18.♖d1 ♕c7 19.♘e3 fxe5 20.♘d5 ♕d6 21.a4± might be worth analysing more deeply.

12...♘a5 13.g4

We want to take on e5 with the knight and not with the rook. Here the rook capture 13.♖xe5 ♗g6! gives Black counterplay.

13...♘bxc4

13...♗g6!? is probably more precise: **14.♘xe5 ♗f6** 14...♘axc4 15.♘dxc4 ♘xc4 16.dxc4 ♕xd1 17.♖xd1 ♗c2 transposes to the main line. **15.♘xg6 hxg6 16.♘e4 ♘axc4 17.dxc4 ♘xc4** (17...♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♘xc4 19.♗f4 ♖ac8 20.♘xf6+ gxf6 21.♖d7 (21.♖ab1!?±) 21...♘b6 22.♖xc7 ♘d5 23.♖xc8 ♖xc8 24.♗d2 ♘xc3 25.a4 b6 26.♔g2 ♘d5 27.♖a3 ♖c4 28.♖d3 ♘f4+ ½-½ Ponizil-Ernst, Vlissingen 2014), and now the endgame is more or less equal, but Black has to be very precise in order to maintain the balance, as the following lines show:

analysis diagram

A) **18.♗f4!?** might be worth trying, e.g. **18...♗e5 19.♕e2N** 19.♕f3 f5 20.♖ad1 fxe4 21.♕e2 ♕f6 22.♕xc4+ ♔h7 23.♗xe5 ♕xf2+ and a draw was soon agreed in Lanz Calavia-Romanov, ICCF email 2013. **19...♗xf4 20.♕xc4 c6** 20...♕h4 21.♔g2 c6 22.♘c5=. **21.♖ad1 ♕c7 22.bxc6 ♖ac8 23.♔g2 ♕xc6** 23...a6!? 24.♔f3 ♗h2 25.♔g2 ♗f4= Jonas Lampert. **24.♕xc6 ♖xc6 25.♖d7 ♖b8** 25...♗c7!? (Lampert) 26.♖e2 b5 27.♖d5 ♖b8 28.♖e3 ♖e6 29.♔f3=. **26.♔f3 ♗c7 27.♖e3 ♖d8 28.♘g5 ♖f8 29.♖ed3=**;

B) The immediate exchange of queens is also possible:

18.♕xd8 and now Black has a choice of rook captures:

B1) 18...♖axd8 19.♘xf6+ gxf6 20.♗f4 ♖d3 21.♖ad1 ♖xc3 22.♖c1 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♘b6 24.♗xc7 ♖c8 25.♗f4 ♖xc1+ 26.♗xc1 ♘d5 27.♗b2 f5 28.gxf5 gxf5 29.♔g2, and White has a small edge;

B2) **18...♖fxd8** 18...♗xd8 is also possible: 19.♘d2 (19.♗f4!?) 19...♘d6 (19...♘xd2!? 20.♗xd2 a6 21.a4 ♗f6 22.♖ad1 axb5 23.axb5 g5= Jonas Lampert) 20.♗a3 f5 21.♖ad1 ♗f6 22.c4 ♗c3 23.♗xd6 cxd6 24.♖e6±. **19.♘xf6+ gxf6 20.♗f4**

analysis diagram

20…♖d5 20…♘a3 21.♖e7 (21.♗xc7 ♖d7 22.b6 ♘b5 is level) 21…♘xb5 22.♖b1 ♘xc3 23.♖xb7 ♘d5 24.♗xc7 ♘xe7 25.♗xd8 ♖xd8 26.♖xe7 with an equal position; 20…♖d3 21.♗xc7 ♘a3 22.♗g3 b6 23.c4 ♘xc4 24.♖ad1 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 a6 26.a4 axb5 27.axb5 ♖a5 28.♖d5 ♘a3 29.♗c7=. **21.a4** 21.♖ad1!?N ♖xb5 22.♖e7 ♖c5 23.♗xc7 b5 24.♖dd7 gives White a slight advantage. **21…♘e5** with equality in Jovanovic-Bosiocic, Austria Bundesliga 2014/15.

14.♘xc4 ♘xc4 15.dxc4 ♕xd1 16.♖xd1 ♗g6

16…e4?! 17.gxh5 exf3 18.♗f4 ♖fe8?! 19.♖d3?! and although White went on to win in Zwirs-Heimann, Amsterdam 2015, 19.♖d7!? ♖ac8 20.♗xc7 would have been even better, giving White a significant advantage.

17.♘xe5 ♗c2 18.♖d2 ♗a4 19.♖d7

After 19.♖e2 a6 20.♘g6 hxg6 21.♖xe7 axb5 22.♖xc7 bxc4 23.♖xc4 ♗b3 24.♖b4 ♗xa2 25.c4 ♖a6 26.♖xb7 ♗xc4 27.♖xa6 ♗xa6 28.♖b6 ♖c8 29.♗f4 ♗c4 30.♖b8 ♖xb8 31.♗xb8 the game ended in a draw in Forcen Esteban-Sandipan, Benasque 2014.

19…♗d6

20.♘f3

The alternative **20.♘d3!?N** gives White a slight initiative, e.g. **20…♖ad8** 20…a6 21.♘b2 ♗c2 (21…axb5 22.♘xa4 bxa4 23.♗e3±) 22.♗e3 ♖fd8 23.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24.c5 ♗e7 25.bxa6 bxa6 26.♗d4±; 20…f5 21.♗f4 ♗xf4 22.♘xf4 fxg4 23.♘e6 ♖f7 24.♖xf7 ♔xf7 25.♘c5 ♗c2 26.hxg4±. **21.♖xd8 ♖xd8 22.♗e3 b6 23.♘b2 ♗c2 24.♖c1 ♗e4 25.c5 bxc5 26.♖d1 ♗f3 27.♖d2 ♖e8 28.♘c4 ♗f8 29.♖d7 ♗e2 30.♘a5 ♗xb5 31.♖xc7 ♖e7 32.♖c8 ♖e8 33.♖xe8 ♗xe8 34.♘b3 c4 35.♘d2±.**

20…f5 21.♘d4 fxg4 22.hxg4

22...♗d1?

22...a6N is called for and is almost equal, e.g. 23.♗e3 axb5 24.cxb5 ♖f7 25.♖xf7 ♔xf7 26.♔g2 ♗e5 27.♖c1 ♗xd4 28.cxd4 c6!=.

23.♗h6! gxh6 24.♖xd1 ♖ad8 25.♖xd8 ♖xd8 26.♖e1 ♔f7 27.♔g2 ♗f8?! 28.a4

28.♖e5!?.

28...♗g7 29.♖e4 ♗f6 30.♔f3 c5 31.bxc6 bxc6 32.♘xc6 ♖d7 33.♘e5+ ♗xe5 34.♖xe5 ♖c7 35.c5 ♖c6 36.♔e4 ♖a6 37.♔d5 ♖xa4 38.c6 ♖a5 39.♔e4

1-0

Guido-Arnaudov, Mantova 2012.

The endgame after 6...d5 may be objectively playable for Black, but it's a walk on the razor's edge. After exchanging on d5 White can attack the pawn on e5 immediately. This leads to an endgame where White has the better chances, especially in a practical game. If White doesn't want to enter an endgame he can play the interesting move 8.a4, which grabs space on the queenside and creates a retreat for his bishop on c4 in typical fashion.

4.2 – 6...d5, 8.a4

Our second suggestion is the new trend 8.a4. It seems that this move poses Black a lot of problems. The second player has tried many moves, but none of them seem to equalise comfortably. Let's take a look.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.0-0 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5

8.a4!?

This grabs space and opens a retreat for the bishop on c4, but here it is worth noting that the bishop often moves to b5 anyway to increase the pressure in the centre. It is also worth noting that in comparison to 8.♖e1 in most cases White avoids the exchange of

queens in what follows.

8...a6

The main move so far. Black controls the square b5 and avoids the idea of White pushing the pawn to a6 in some lines.

A) **8...a5** This is the most important move besides 8...a6. Black wants to prevent the further advance of the white a-pawn, but on the other hand the first player still has the chance to put his bishop on b5. **9.♘bd2**

A1) **9...h6 10.♖e1 ♘f6 11.h3 ♕d6** 11...♖e8 12.♕b3 ♖e7 13.♘e4 ♘xe4 14.dxe4 ♖d7 (otherwise White can play ♘h4) 15.♗e3±. **12.♗b5! ♗f5 13.♗xc6** 13.♘b3!?N ♖fe8 14.♘xc5 ♕xc5 15.♗e3 ♕d5 16.d4 exd4 17.♘xd4 ♘xd4 18.♕xd4 c6 19.♗c4 ♕xd4 20.♗xd4±. **13...bxc6** (Heimann-Kociscak, Zillertal tt 2015) Now **14.♘xe5!N ♗xd3 15.♘xd3 ♕xd3 16.♘e4 ♕xd1 17.♘xf6+ gxf6 18.♖xd1** obviously leads to a better endgame for White;

A2) **9...♗g4 10.♘e4 ♗b6** (Sanchez Liecano-Varesi, Uruguay tt 1997) **11.♖e1N ♕d7 12.h3 ♗xf3** 12...♗h5? 13.♘xe5! ♘xe5 14.♕xh5±. **13.♕xf3 ♖ad8 14.♘g3±**;

A3) **9...♘b6 10.♗b5!** Of course! This motif is a crucial part of White's strategy.

A31) **10...f6 11.d4! exd4 12.♘b3 ♗d6 13.♘bxd4 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 ♗e5** (Demchenko-Georgescu, Iasi 2015) **15.♗e3!?N ♘d5 16.♗c4 ♔h8 17.♘f3 ♘xe3 18.♕xd8 ♖xd8 19.♘xe5 fxe5 20.fxe3±** With ♖f7 to follow. White has some initiative here;

A32) **10...♗d6**

analysis diagram

This is a relatively untested position in practice. White can head for an almost equal endgame, as in Predojevic-Banusz, or enter complications with **11.♖e1!** (11.♘e4 ♘a7! 12.d4 ♘xb5 13.axb5 exd4 14.♘xd6 ♕xd6 15.♕xd4 ♗d7 16.♗f4 ♕xd4 17.♘xd4 ♖fc8= Predojevic-Banusz, Austria Bundesliga 2015/16), a logical developing move. At the time we first analysed this position, this was a novelty. Later, Anish Giri played this move during the Grand Chess Tour in Leuven against Levon Aronian. **11...♘a7** 11...♗f5 seems more solid, e.g. 12.♘c4 ♘xc4 13.♗xc4 ♕d7 14.♕b3 h6 15.♘d2 ♖ae8 16.♘e4 ♗e7 17.♗e3 b6 18.♖ad1±; for 11...♗g4 please take a look at Giri-Aronian, Leuven (blitz) 2016, in our Strategy chapter. **12.♗c4 ♗f5 13.♗b3! ♗xd3 14.♘e4 ♗xe4 15.♖xe4**

analysis diagram

In this position White has a strong initiative and many attacking chances, as you can readily see from the following lines:

A321) **15…♘d7?!** is a mistake that gives White an excellent position: **16.♘g5 ♗e7** 16…♘f6? 17.♖h4 h6 18.♕f3! e4 (18…hxg5? 19.♗xg5+–; 18…♗c5? 19.♘h3 ♘h7 20.♕g4 ♔h8 21.♗xh6 gxh6 22.♖xh6 ♖g8 23.♕h5 ♖g7 24.♗c2+–) 19.♘xe4 ♘xe4 20.♖xe4±; 16…h6 17.♕h5 ♕f6 18.♖h4 ♘c5 19.♗c2±. **17.♘e6 fxe6 18.♗xe6+ ♔h8 19.♗xd7±**;

A322) **15…♘c6 16.♖g4 ♘e7** 16…♗e7 17.♕e2 ♔h8 18.♘xe5 ♘xe5 19.♕xe5 ♗f6 20.♕f5 g6 21.♕c2±. **17.♘g5 ♘f5 18.♗c2 e4 19.♘xe4 ♗e7 20.♕f3±**

B) **8…♘b6**

B1) **9.♗g5!?N** is an interesting novelty mentioned by FM Ufuk Tuncer. After **9…♗e7** (9…♕d6 10.b4 ♘xc4 11.bxc5 ♕g6 12.dxc4 e4 13.♗f4 exf3 14.♕xf3±) **10.♗xe7 ♕xe7 11.♗b5 ♗d7 12.a5!?** (12.♖e1 a6 13.♗xc6 ♗xc6 14.♘xe5 ♖ae8 15.d4 f6 16.♘d3 ♕f7∞; here Black has a nice bishop and a lead in development) **12…♘d5 13.a6** White has a serious initiative. This position deserves to be tested;

B2) **9.♗b5!**

B21) The interesting **9…♘e7!?** is a computer-generated suggestion. Black is giving up a pawn, hoping thereby to get sufficient counterplay with the bishop pair. **10.a5** After the novelty 10.♘xe5N c6 11.♗c4 ♗d6 12.♗f4 ♘xc4 13.dxc4 ♘f5 Black also seems to have enough compensation for the pawn. **10…c6 11.axb6 cxb5 12.♖xa7 ♖xa7 13.bxa7 ♗xa7 14.♘xe5**

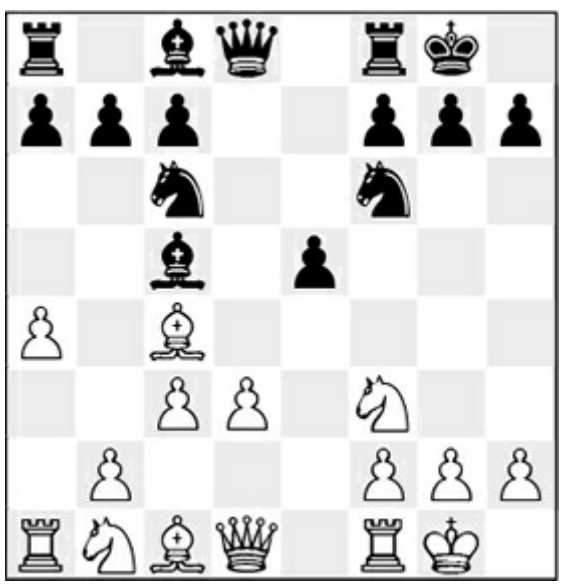
analysis diagram

Black has compensation with the bishops and has managed to hold the position in recent games, for example: **14…♗f5** 14…♗b8 15.d4 ♘d5 16.♘d2 f6 (Bok-Georgiadis, Biel 2016) 17.♘d3N ♗f5 18.♕f3 ♕d6 19.g3 ♗g6 20.♖e1 ♕c6 21.♘c5±. **15.♗e3** 15.♖e1 ♗b8

16.♘a3 b4 17.cxb4 ♕d5 and Black's play on the light squares compensated for the pawns in the game Anand-So, St Louis 2016. **15...♗b8 16.d4 ♘g6** 16...f6N 17.♘f3 ♘d5 could be a better try for Black. **17.♘xg6 hxg6 18.♘d2 ♕d6 19.g3** 19.♘f3N is a clear-cut solution, with the idea 19...♗g4 20.♖e1! ♗xf3 21.♕xf3 ♕xh2+ 22.♔f1±. **19...♕d5 20.♖e1 ♖e8** (Milliet-Hammer, France tt 2016) **21.f3N** with the idea 22.♗f2 should be better for White in the long run;

B22) **9...♗d6 10.a5 ♘d5 11.a6 ♘ce7 12.♘bd2** 12.♖e1!±. **12...♘g6 13.♘e4 ♘df4 14.d4 exd4** (Demchenko-Jakovenko, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014) **15.♘xd4!N bxa6 16.♗xa6 ♗e5 17.♗xc8** 17.♗xf4 ♘xf4 18.♘f3 ♗xa6 19.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 20.♖xa6±. **17...♕xc8 18.♘f3 ♕b7 19.♕a4±** △ 19...♘e2+ 20.♔h1 ♘xc1 21.♖fxc1 ♕xb2?? 22.♖ab1 ♕e2 23.♖e1 ♕d3 24.♖bd1**+–**.

C) **8...♘f6**



analysis diagram

This voluntary retreat has been played by Hikaru Nakamura.

C1) **9.♘bd2 ♗f5 10.♕e2 ♕e7 11.♘e4 ♘xe4 12.dxe4 ♗e6 13.b4 ♗d6 14.a5 f6 15.♗e3 ♘d8 16.♖fd1 ♘f7 17.♘d2 ♖fd8** (Shankland-Nakamura, Baku 2015) **18.f3!N** Shankland reduced his potential with 18.♗xe6 ♕xe6 19.♕c4 ♕xc4 20.♘xc4 a6= and the game soon petered out in a draw. **18...a6 19.♘b3** and White still has some annoying pressure on the queenside;

C2) The immediate advance **9.b4!?** promises White an advantage: **9...♗d6 10.♗g5!?** 10.♘bd2N seems more to the point, e.g. 10...a6 11.♖e1 h6 12.h3 ♗f5 13.♘e4±. **10...h6** 10...e4 11.dxe4 h6 12.♗h4 g5 13.♗g3 ♘xe4 14.♗d5 ♘f6 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♘bd2±. **11.♗h4 ♗g4 12.h3** 12.♘bd2N gives White an advantage too. **12...♗f5** 12...♗xf3 13.♕xf3 e4 14.♕f5 exd3 15.♗xd3±. **13.♘bd2 a5 14.b5 ♘b8** and now in Popov-Predke, Kaliningrad 2015, the surprising **15.♘h2!** gave White a clear plus, e.g. **15...♘bd7 16.♕f3 ♗g6 17.♘g4 ♗e7 18.♗xf6 ♗xf6 19.♕xb7±**

D) **8...♗f5** (Ausserer-Csida, Austria jr 2001) **9.♘bd2N ♘b6 10.♗b5 ♗xd3 11.♖e1 e4** 11...f6? 12.♘b3+–. **12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 13.♕xd8 ♖axd8 14.♖xe4 ♖d1+ 15.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 16.♘xe1±** White has the bishop pair, but he can also think about spoiling Black's pawn structure by taking on c6;

E) 8...♗e6?!N. This has never been played and with good reason. White gets the upper hand with 9.♘g5!, e.g. 9...♕f6 10.♘xe6 fxe6 11.♕e2 ♕g6 12.♔h1 ♖ad8 13.g3 ♖f7 14.♘d2 ♗b6 15.♘e4±.

9.♘bd2

For 9.a5!? see the game Karjakin-Giri in the Strategy chapter.

9...♘b6

If Black develops the bishop to g4 White has the chance to gain some tempi in typical

fashion by attacking this piece:

A) **9…♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.♖e1** 12.a5!?± ♕d7? 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♕xh5± Brkic-Schachinger, Zadar 2015. **12…♘b6** 12…f6 13.♘g3 ♗f7 14.d4±. **13.♗b3 ♗g6 14.a5 ♘d5 15.♗a4!?** An important motif to keep in mind. White threatens to win the pawn on e5. **15…f6 16.♘h4! ♘xa5** 16…f5!? 17.♘xg6 hxg6 18.♘g3±. **17.♘xg6 hxg6 18.b4 b5 19.♗c2 ♘b7** Antipov-Sevian, Wijk aan Zee 2016.

analysis diagram

20.♕g4!!N f5 20…♔h7 21.♕h4+ ♔g8 22.♗b3 c6 23.c4 bxc4 24.dxc4 ♘xb4 25.♖d1 ♕e8 26.c5+ ♘d5 27.♖xd5 cxd5 28.♗xd5+ ♖f7 29.♗xb7 f5 30.♗g5+–. **21.♕xg6 fxe4** 21…♕e8 22.♕g3 c6 23.♘g5±. **22.♕xe4 c6 23.d4 ♘f6 24.♕xc6 ♕d7 25.♕xd7 ♘xd7 26.dxe5±** White has a strong pawn armada on the kingside in exchange for the knight and a strong bishop pair;

B) **9…♗f5 10.♘e4 ♗e7 11.♖e1 ♗g6 12.a5 ♕d7 13.♕b3 ♘f6** 13…♖fd8N 14.♕xb7 ♘db4 15.cxb4 ♖db8 16.♕xa8 ♖xa8 17.b5 axb5 18.♗xb5±. **14.♘h4 ♘xe4 15.♘xg6 hxg6 16.dxe4 ♗c5 17.h3** 17.♗g5!?N ♖ab8 18.♕d1 ♕xd1 19.♖exd1±. **17…♕e7 18.♗e3 ♖ab8** 18…♗xe3N 19.♖xe3 ♕c5 20.♖f3±. **19.♗d5 ♘d8 20.♕a2 ♖e8 21.♖ad1 b6 22.axb6 ♖xb6 23.b4 ♗xe3 24.♖xe3 ♘e6 25.♗xe6 ♖xe6** and now a typical endgame follows, which could also be placed in the endgame chapter: **26.♖d5 ♖d6 27.♖ed3 ♖ed8 28.g3 ♖xd5?! 29.♖xd5 ♖d6 30.♔g2 ♔f8?! 31.♕a5 ♖xd5 32.♕xd5 ♕f6 33.♕c5+ ♕e7 34.♕c6 ♕d8?! 35.♕xa6 ♕d7 36.♕a8+ ♔e7 37.♕d5 ♕d6 38.♕xd6+ ♔xd6 39.c4 f6 40.♔f3 ♔e6 41.♔e3 ♔d6 42.♔d3 ♔c6 43.♔c3 1-0** Souleidis-Davletbayeva, Riga 2016.

10.♗a2

10…♗g4

A) Taking the pawn with **10…♕xd3N** is very risky as White has more than enough compensation after **11.a5 ♘d7 12.♗b1 ♕d6 13.♘g5** (13.b4!? ♗a7 14.♗a3 also looks good for White) **13…♘f6** (13…h6N 14.♕c2 g6 15.♘ge4 ♕e7 16.♘f3 ♔g7 17.♘xc5 ♘xc5 18.b4 ♘e6 19.♖e1 ♕f6 20.♕d2 and here Black probably has to give back the pawn with 20…♘g5 21.♘xg5 hxg5 22.♕xg5 ♕xg5 23.♗xg5± leaving White with the bishop pair and the more pleasant endgame) **14.♕c2 g6** (14…♘e7 15.♘ge4 ♗f5 16.♘xd6 ♗xc2 17.♘xb7 ♗xb1 18.♘xc5 ♗f5 19.♘c4 ♘c6 Cornette-Naroditsky, Ajaccio 2016 and now 20.♖d1N gives White a slight initiative) **15.♘ge4 ♗f5 16.♘xd6 ♗xc2 17.♘xb7 ♗xb1 18.♘xc5 ♗c2 19.♘c4 ♘e4 20.♘xe4 ♗xe4 21.♖e1 f5 22.f3 ♗c2 23.♘xe5 ♖fe8 24.♗f4±** J.Schröder-Shirov, Helsingor 2016;

B) 10…♗f5 11.a5 ♘c8 12.♘e4 ♗e7 13.♖e1 ♗g6 (Vitiugov-Zhukova, Doha 2015) 14.♗e3N ♔h8 15.h3 ♗h5 16.g4 ♗g6 17.♗c4 ♘d6 18.♗d5 ♘xe4 19.dxe4 ♗d6 20.♕d3 f6 21.♘h4±.

11.h3 ♗h5

Three high-level games have been played in this position, and all indicate that White is better.

12.a5

12.♘e4 ♗e7 13.♖e1 ♗g6 14.a5 ♘c8 (Stevic-Blagojevic, Reykjavik Ech-tt 2015; 14…♘d7N 15.♗d5±) 15.♗e3±.

12…♘d7 13.♘e4 ♗e7 14.b4 ♔h8 15.♘g3 ♗g6 16.♗d5

16.♖e1 f5 17.♗e6!? (17.♗d5±) 17…♖f6?! 18.♕b3 f4 19.♘e4 ♖f8, (Stevic-Bosiocic, Bol 2015) 20.♗d5±.

16…f5

Demchenko-Tomashevsky, Vladivostok 2014.

17.♖e1N h6 18.♗d2 ♗d6 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.c4±

This 8.a4!? idea really looks very promising for White. The voluntary retreat of the knight to f6 gives White the opportunity to push the b-pawn immediately. If Black continues with 8…a5 or other moves, White should always keep in mind the possibility of putting the bishop on b5 in order to increase the pressure in the centre. If Black continues with 8…a6 then we can retreat the bishop to a2 or b3.

All of the lines in which Black puts his light-squared bishop on g4 seem to favour White because he can develop his game in typical Italian fashion by attacking this bishop with h2-h3 and following up with the typical manoeuvre ♘e4-♘g3.

And finally, a nice idea you should always watch out for is pushing the a-pawn to a6 and spoiling the black pawn structure if Black doesn't move his a-pawn.

4.3 – Black plays …d7-d5 later

This direct advance is also critical later, as it would save a full tempo over the black main lines with …d7-d6 followed by …♗e6 and …d6-d5 afterwards. But this comes at a price. Black is not yet ready to defend the pawn on e5 easily with …♖e8, as often d3-d4 or ♘fg5 can follow, overloading Black's defence. So White can meet the central advance in two ways: by ♖e1, to attack the pawn on e5, or by ♘e4 to attack the bishop on c5. Often both moves will be played anyway. When taking the pawn on e5 White must be careful not to run into a tactic connected with …♗xf2+.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 0-0

6…♗a7 7.♘bd2 0-0 (7…d6 8.♗b3 transposes to the main line; 7…d5?! would be a bad novelty in view of 8.exd5 ♘xd5 9.♖e1± and Black has problems defending his pawn on e5) 8.h3 d5 is another move order and transposes to the text.

7.♘bd2 ♗a7

Black can also play the advance of the d-pawn directly: **7…d5 8.exd5 ♘xd5 9.♖e1** Here Black can react to the threat against the pawn on e5 in different ways, but White is always able to retain a slight initiative:

analysis diagram

A) **9…b5 10.♗b3 ♘f6 11.a4 b4** 11…♗f5 12.♘e4 ♗xe4 13.dxe4 ♕xd1 14.♗xd1 b4 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.♖xe3 ♖ab8 17.♖c1⩲; 11…♕xd3? 12.♗c2 ♕d6 13.axb5 ♘e7 14.b4 ♗b6 15.♘xe5+–. **12.♘c4 ♘g4 13.♖e2 ♗e6 14.♗g5 ♕d7 15.♗h4 bxc3 16.bxc3 ♖ab8 17.♗a2⩲** Belov-Bartsch, IECG email 1999;

B) 9…♖e8?! 10.d4⩲;

C) **9…♘f6 10.a4 h6 11.b4 ♗d6 12.♕b3** 12.h3!?N b6 13.♕e2 ♖e8 (13…♗b7 14.♘e4 ♘xe4 15.♕xe4 ♘a5 16.♗d5⩲) 14.♘e4⩲. **12…b6 13.♘e4** ½-½ Radjabov-Bacrot, Halkidiki Ech tt 2011. **13.h3N** instead should be a bit better for White;

D) **9…♗g4 10.♘e4** The move order 10.h3!? also scores very well for White: 10…♗h5 11.♘e4 ♗e7 (11…♗a7 12.♘g3 transposes) 12.♘g3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 ♘b6 14.♗b3 ♗g5 15.♘e4 ♗xc1 16.♖axc1 and in this position White is clearly better, e.g.

analysis diagram

16…♕e7 17.♕h5 h6 18.♖e3 (18.♘g3!?N) 18…♖ad8? (18…♘a5 is called for) 19.♖f3 ♘a5 20.♘f6+ ♔h8 21.♘g4 (21.♖e1!?N ♘xb3 22.♖xe5 ♕d6 23.♘e4 ♕g6 24.♕xg6 fxg6 25.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 26.axb3+–) 21…f6 22.♗c2 ♕e8 23.♕h4 h5?! 24.♘xf6 gxf6 (Dragun-Banusz, Katowice tt 2016) and now 25.♖f5 is even stronger than the game move 25.♖xf6 after which White won as well: 25…♔g7 26.d4+–. **10…♗a7 11.h3 ♗h5** 11…♗f5 12.a4 f6 13.♕b3 ♗e6 14.a5 ♖b8 15.♗e3! ♗xe3 16.fxe3 ♗f7 17.♘c5 b6 18.axb6 cxb6 19.♘xa6 ♖a8 20.♕d1 ♘a5 21.♗xd5 ♗xd5 22.♘b4⩲. **12.♘g3 ♗g6 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5**

analysis diagram

14...♘b6 It is important that the typical 14...♗xf2+? is met by 15.♔xf2 ♕f6+ 16.♔f3 ♕xe5 17.d4 ♕e7 18.♗xd5+–. **15.♗b3 ♗xd3?!** 15...♕xd3 16.♗f4 ♘d7 17.♕xd3 ♗xd3 18.♖e7±. **16.♗g5 ♕d6 17.♖e3 ♗c4?!** (Rydström-Goczo, Budapest 2015) **18.♕g4!N ♕g6** 18...♗xb3 19.♘f5 ♕d7 20.♗f6+–. **19.♘f5 ♔h8 20.♘e7 ♕d6 21.♖d1 ♕c5 22.♘f5 ♖g8 23.♘xg7 ♖xg7 24.♗f6+–**

8.h3

8.♖e1?! can be met by 8...d6 9.♗b3 (9.♘f1 ♘a5; 9.h3 ♘a5) 9...♘g4 10.♖e2 ♔h8 11.h3 ♘h6 12.♘f1 f5 with counterplay.

8...d5

8...d6 9.♗b3 transposes to the main line.

9.exd5! ♘xd5 10.♘e4

10...♗f5

A) 10...♘f4? 11.♗xf4 exf4 12.d4 ♗f5 13.♗d3 ♖e8 (Volokitin-Ben Artzi, Berlin Wch blitz 2015) 14.♖e1N ♕d5 15.♘fd2 ♖e7 16.♕f3±;

B) 10...h6? 11.♗xh6! ♘xc3 12.bxc3 gxh6 (Bok-Miroshnichenko, St Petersburg 2015) 13.♗d5N ♘e7 14.♗b3 ♘c6 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.♕h5+–;

C) 10...♔h8!? 11.♖e1 f6 12.a4 (12.d4!?) 12...♗e6 (Ivkovic-Abdusattorova, Halkidiki jr W 2015) 13.b4!?N ♕d7 14.b5 axb5 15.♗xb5 ♖fd8 (15...♗xh3 16.gxh3 ♕xh3 17.♗xc6 bxc6 18.d4±) 16.a5 ♗f5 (16...♕f7 17.d4 ♘de7 18.♕e2±; 16...♘de7 17.♗e3 ♗d5 18.♗xa7 ♖xa7 19.d4 ♕c8 20.♕c2±) 17.♗d2 ♘de7 18.a6 bxa6 19.♖xa6 ♗b6 20.♖xa8 ♖xa8 21.♕e2 ♖a2 22.d4±;

D) 10...f5? 11.♗g5 ♕d7 12.♕b3+–;

E) 10...♖e8? 11.♘fg5! f6? 12.♕h5 fxg5 13.♗xd5+ ♗e6 14.♗xe6+ ♖xe6 15.♘xg5+–;

F) 10...f6 is recommended by Bologan via transposition and can be met in two distinctly

different ways:

analysis diagram

F1) 11.a4!?, to start a pawn storm on the queenside: 11…♗e6 12.♖e1 ♗f7 (Guedes-Gysi, ICCF email 2001) 13.b4N ♕d7 14.♗d2±;

F2) Or 11.d4, to play with an isolated pawn: 11…exd4 12.cxd4 (taking back with 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.cxd4 ♔h8 14.♖e1 is less risky, but also less principled) 12…♔h8 13.♖e1 ♗f5 14.a3 ♖e8 15.♘c5 and White is slightly better.

11.♖e1

11.a4!?N is a logical alternative to prevent 11…b5.

11...b5 12.♗b3 ♗g6 13.♗g5

White provokes …f7-f6, as Black is then very weak on the light squares. The typical lever 13.a4!? is the alternative, e.g. 13…b4 14.♗d2 bxc3 (14…♔h8 15.a5 f6 16.♗c4 bxc3 17.bxc3 ♗f7 18.♕a4±) 15.bxc3 f6 16.a5 ♗f7 17.♗c4 ♘de7 18.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 19.♗e3 ♗xe3 20.fxe3 h6 21.d4 f5 22.♘c5±.

13...f6 14.♗e3 ♔h8?

14…♗xe3N 15.fxe3 ♘a5 limits the damage, e.g. 16.♘c5 ♘xb3 17.axb3 ♕d6 18.d4 ♗h5 19.♕e2 f5 20.♕f2 ♗xf3 21.♕xf3±.

15.♗xa7 ♖xa7 16.d4± ♘f4 17.dxe5 ♘d3 18.exf6! ♘xe1 19.fxg7+ ♔xg7 20.♕xe1 ♕e7

20…♖e8 21.♘fg5!±.

21.♘fg5 ♖f5?

21…♘d8 22.♖d1±.

22.f4 ♔h8 23.♕h4 ♖f8 24.♖e1 ♘d8 25.♕f2 ♖a8 26.♘c5 ♕d6 27.g3 h6 28.♘ge6 ♖f6 29.♖d1 ♕xd1+ 30.♗xd1 ♘xe6 31.♘xe6 ♖e8 32.♘c5 ♖d6 33.♗c2 ♖ed8 34.f5 ♖d2 35.♕f4

1-0

Muzychuk-Zhao Xue, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014.

The direct central advance …d7-d5 has the disadvantage that Black is not yet ready to defend the pawn on e5 easily with …♖e8. If a solid set-up with …f7-f6 is reached then White can either aim for the central break d3-d4 or play on the queenside with a4 and b4-b5. The variation is not played very often and so far White has scored very well.

4.4 – The early 6.♘bd2

If you want to play with ♘bd2 anyway, you can use the following move order, which is especially good against an early …d7-d5.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2

With the idea of the direct ♘e4 after capturing on d5 so that Black has no time for …a7-a6

followed by …♗a7.

6...d5

Black can of course transpose to the main lines with 6…d6 or 6…a6.

7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♘e4

To use the early development of White's knight as Black's bishop cannot retreat to a7 now. In general it is not so easy for Black to protect the e5-pawn comfortably now.

8...♗e7

One sample line after **8...♗b6** runs **9.0-0** and now:

A) **9...♗g4 10.h3** 10.a4!?N. **10...♗h5 11.♘g3 ♗g6 12.♖e1 ♖e8 13.a4**

analysis diagram

An important move. White needs the option ♗a2 just in case. **13...a6 14.d4** Now this break can finally follow. **14...e4 15.♗g5** and now:

A1) **15...f6 16.♘h4! fxg5** 16…♘a5 17.♗xd5+ ♕xd5 18.♗f4±. **17.♘xg6 hxg6 18.♕b3 ♘ce7 19.a5 ♗a7 20.♕xb7 ♔h7 21.♘xe4 ♔h6 22.♕b3±** White has two pawns, a lot of activity and the better pawn structure for the piece;

A2) **15...♕d6?! 16.♘h4 e3** (Adhiban-Danailov, Benasque 2015) **17.f4!N e2** 17…h6 18.♘hf5 ♗xf5 19.♘xf5 ♕g6 20.♕g4±. **18.♖xe2 ♖xe2 19.♕xe2 ♘xf4 20.♗xf4 ♕xf4 21.♘xg6 hxg6 22.♘e4±**

B) **9...f6 10.a4 ♗e6 11.b4 a6 12.a5 ♗a7 13.♗e3 ♗xe3?!** 13…♔h8 14.♗xa7 ♖xa7 15.♕b3±. **14.fxe3 ♗f7 15.♕e1 ♕e7 16.♘c5 ♘d8?! 17.♘h4 g6?! 18.♕g3 ♔h8?! 19.♗xd5! ♗xd5 20.♕xg6 ♗xg2 21.♕h6! 1-0** Vajda-Müller, Pardubice 2014.

9.0-0

9...♘b6

The alternative is **9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5** and now:

A) 11.♖e1!? ♘b6 12.♘g3 ♗g6 13.♗b5 ♗d6 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 16.♖xe5 ♕xd3 17.♕xd3 ♗xd3 18.♖c5 ♖ae8 19.♗e3 f5 20.♘h5 ♘d5 21.♗d4 g6 (Sutovsky-Popovic, playchess.com 2004) 22.c4N ♖e4 23.♗g7! ♖d8 24.♘f6+ ♘xf6 25.♗xf6 ♖d7 26.b3±;

B) **11.♘g3** is played more often, e.g. **11...♗g6 12.♖e1 ♗f6** 12...a6?! 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♘b6 15.♗b3 ♗f6 16.♖e3± Iovcov-Radulov, Golden Sands 2013, and White was just a pawn up. **13.♘e4 ♘b6 14.♗b5!** Of course. If White can destroy the black pawn structure he can even exchange his nice light-squared bishop. **14...♖e8 15.a4 a6 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.a5 ♘d5 18.♕a4 ♕d7 19.♘c5 ♕d6 20.♕c4 ♘e7** (Areschenko-Eljanov, Germany Bundesliga 2015/16) **21.♗g5!?N ♗xg5 22.♘xg5 ♕d5 23.b3±**

10.♗b3 ♗f5

10...♗g4 11.♘g3 ♕d7 12.h3 ♗e6 13.♖e1 13.♗xe6 ♕xe6 14.♖e1 ♖ad8 15.♕e2 ♖fe8 16.a4 ♘a5 17.b4 ♘b3 18.♖b1 ♘xc1 19.♖bxc1 ♘xa4 20.♕c2 ♘b6 21.♖xe5 ♕d7 22.♖ce1± Fressinet-Hammer, Yerevan Ech 2014. **13...♗xb3 14.axb3 ♗d6** 14...f6N 15.b4 a6 16.♗e3 ♘d5 17.♕b3 ♔h8 18.♖ad1 ♘xe3 19.♖xe3 ♖ad8 20.d4 exd4 21.♘xd4 f5 22.♘ge2 ♗g5 23.f4 ♗f6 24.♕c2 ♘e7 25.♖ed3 ♕c8 26.♘f3 and White's pieces have better prospects. **15.b4 a6 16.♕b3 ♖ad8 17.♗e3±** Pourramezanali-Ismagambetov, Tabriz 2014.

11.a4 a5

Black has to stop the further pawn advance.

12.♗e3 ♘d5

13.♖e1

Surprisingly, even 13.♗c4 ♘xe3 14.fxe3 ♗xe4 15.dxe4 ♗c5 16.♕e2 ♕e7 17.h4 worked

out well for White in the following game: 17…♘d8 (17…♔h8 18.♘g5 ♘d8 should hold for Black) 18.♖ad1 ♗d6? (18…♔h8!) 19.♘g5 h6 20.♕g4! hxg5 21.hxg5 ♗c5 22.♖f3 ♘e6 23.g6+– Rapport-Blagojevic, Paracin 2014. The young Hungarian super-grandmaster Richard Rapport went on to win and showed his amazing creativity again.

13…♕d7

Degraeve-Ragger, France tt 2014. **13…♘xe3 14.♖xe3 ♗g6 15.♗c4 ♔h8 16.♕b3 ♖b8 17.♖ae1** White's set-up is very harmonious. **17…f5 18.♘ed2 ♗d6 19.♗b5 ♕f6 20.h3 ♗h5** (Adhiban-Stefanova, Gibraltar 2014) **21.♕c2!?N ♗c5** 21…♘e7 22.♘xe5 ♗xe5 23.♖xe5 ♘g6 24.♖5e3±. **22.d4 exd4 23.♖e6 ♕d8 24.cxd4 ♗b4 25.♗xc6 bxc6 26.♖1e3 ♗f7 27.♖xc6±**

14.♘g3!?N ♗e6

If 14…♗g6 15.♗c4 ♖ad8 16.♕b3 f6 17.d4 ♗f7 18.♖ad1±, White has a nice initiative in the centre.

15.♗c1

This slightly paradoxical retreat is poisonous as Black has problems defending the pawn on e5.

15…♕d6

A) 15…f6? 16.d4 exd4 17.♘xd4 ♘xd4 18.♕xd4 ♖ad8 19.c4 ♘b6 20.♕xd7 ♘xd7 21.♖xe6 ♘c5 22.♖e3 ♘xb3 23.♖xb3 ♖d1+ 24.♘f1 ♗c5 25.♖e3 ♗xe3 26.fxe3 ♖fd8 27.♔f2 ♔f7 28.♔e2 c5 29.b3±;

B) 15…♖ae8 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♖xe5 ♗d6 18.♖e4 f5 19.♖e1 ♗f7 20.♖xe8 ♖xe8 21.♗d2± and Black does not have enough compensation for the pawn;

C) 15…♗d6? 16.♘g5±;

D) 15…♗f6 16.♗g5! ♗xg5 17.♘xg5 ♖fe8 18.d4 exd4 19.♕d3 ♘f6 20.♘xe6 fxe6 21.♘e4 ♘xe4 22.♖xe4 ♖ad8 23.♖ae1 ♔h8 24.♖h4↑. White has a strong initiative for the pawn, which he will probably get back very soon.

16.♗c4 ♖ad8

A) 16…♖ae8 17.♗b5 f5 18.♗xc6 bxc6 19.♖xe5±;

B) 16…f5 17.♕c2!? ♖ae8 18.b3 ♘b6 19.♗a3 ♕d7 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 21.♗b5±.

17.♗b5 f6 18.d4 exd4 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.♘xd4

White is slightly better.

Conclusion

It is a matter of taste which move order you prefer and this is mostly a question of how you want to deal with a quick black …d7-d5, as otherwise the move orders will often just transpose. If you do not want to make do without a quick 0-0, see Chapter 9.2 for a short

discussion of this topic, which falls outside of our recommended repertoire.

Chapter 5
Minor black alternatives

Black can of course try many non-standard set-ups, and we have collected a few in this chapter. Most important is probably the plan with a quick …f7-f5 – see Chapter 5.2. If this worked well then we would be in trouble, as Black would get quick and easy kingside counterplay. But fortunately there is no really good way to implement it against our recommended move order.

5.1 – Black waits to play …0-0

Black can try to attack White's early castled king, but usually such premature attacks do not work well. We start with the early …♗g4, which also is not dangerous as the pinned knight on f3 cannot easily be attacked by Black's pieces.

5.1.1 – Black plays …♗g4

This is usually harmless as long as White does not allow dangerous sacrifices on h3 or attacks against the castled king. Usually White can just follow the usual plan to bring the knight to f1. White can also often consider playing on the queenside with b2-b4 and a2-a4.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6

After **5…d6 6.0-0 ♗g4 7.♘bd2 ♕d7** we suggest

analysis diagram

8.b4 ♗b6 9.♖e1 0-0 10.h3. Now it is possible for White to play this, as Black has finally castled.

A) **10…♗xh3** This move may look dangerous if you are not used to such sacrifices, but it just doesn't work. Usually Black needs to follow up with something like …♘g4/…♔h8/…f7-f5, but this manoeuvre is not possible here: **11.gxh3 ♕xh3 12.♘f1 ♕g4+** 12…♘g4 13.♗e3 ♔h8 14.♘3h2± **13.♔h1 ♕h3+** 13…♗xf2 14.♘1h2 ♕h5 15.♖e2 ♗b6 16.♖g2±. **14.♘3h2 ♗xf2 15.♖e2 ♘g4 16.♖b2 h5 17.♕f3**, and White had a big advantage in Medvegy-Kabisch, Germany Bundesliga 2003/04. This is a typical 'Italian constellation', where the white piece is worth far more than the three black pawns;

B) **10…♗e6N 11.♗xe6 ♕xe6** 11…fxe6 12.♘c4±. **12.♘c4 a6 13.♘xb6 cxb6 14.d4±**

6.0-0 d6 7.♘bd2 ♗a7

After **7…♗g4** we suggest:

A) **8.b4!?** To make it more difficult for Black to castle queenside, e.g. **8…♗a7 9.a4**:

A1) 9…d5?! 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♕b3 ♗e6 12.♘e4 0-0 13.♘fg5± (Stadler-Quinn, Pula

1997);

A2) **9…h6** (Salimaki-Graeffe, ch-FIN jr 1987) **10.♖e1!?N 0-0** 10…♕d7 11.♘f1±. **11.h3 ♗h5** and now

analysis diagram

12.♗a2!? to meet **12…d5** with **13.g4!**. White is better as the following lines show:

A21) 13…♗g6 14.b5 axb5 15.axb5 ♘e7 16.♘xe5 dxe4 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.dxe4 ♕xd1 19.♖xd1 ♗xe4 20.♗e3 ♗xe3 21.♗xf7+! ♔h7 22.♖xa8 ♖xa8 23.fxe3±;

A22) 13…♘xg4? 14.hxg4 ♗xg4 15.exd5 ♘e7 16.♖e4±;

A23) After the surprising computer move **13…♕c8**, a possible line is: **14.♘h2! ♗g6** 14…d4 15.b5±. **15.exd5 ♘e7 16.♕f3 ♕d8 17.♖xe5 c6 18.d6 ♘ed5** 18…♕xd6 19.♘c4 ♕d7 20.♖e1±. **19.d4 ♘xb4 20.♗b1 ♘bd5 21.a5±**;

A24) **13…dxe4 14.gxh5! exf3 15.♕xf3 ♕d7 16.♘c4 ♖fe8 17.♗xh6! e4** 17…gxh6? 18.♕xf6 ♕xh3 19.♘d6 ♕g3+ 20.♔f1 ♕h3+ 21.♔e2+–. **18.♕g2 ♘xh5 19.d4 ♕f5 20.♘e3 ♕h7 21.♗g5±**

A3) **9…0-0 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♖e1 d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♘e4**:

A31) **13…f6N 14.♗a3 ♖e8 15.b5 ♘a5 16.♗a2 ♔h8** 16…♗f7 17.bxa6 bxa6 18.d4±. **17.♗b4 c6 18.♗xd5 cxd5 19.♘d6 ♖e6 20.♘xe5!±**, e.g. **20…fxe5** 20…♗xd1 21.♘df7+ ♔g8 22.♘xd8 ♖xd8 23.♗xa5 ♖c8 24.♖axd1 fxe5 25.♖c1±. **21.♕xh5 ♖xd6 22.♗xd6 ♕xd6 23.♕xe5±**;

A32) **13…♔h8 14.b5** 14.♗d2!?N looks promising, e.g. 14…f6 15.b5 axb5 16.axb5 ♘ce7 17.♗b3! ♖e8 18.♖a2 h6 19.♘g3 ♗f7 20.d4 exd4 21.c4!±. **14…axb5 15.axb5 ♗xf2+ 16.♘xf2 ♖xa1 17.bxc6 bxc6?** 17…♗xf3!N 18.♕xf3 bxc6 19.d4±. **18.g4 ♗g6 19.♘xe5±** Hoiberg-Christensen, Denmark tt 1989.

B) One model game with the main move **8.♗b3** is Kindermann-Dietmayer Kräutler, Austria Bundesliga 2006/07:

B1) **8…h6 9.♖e1 0-0 10.h3** This pawn advance is usually possible when Black has already castled kingside. **10…♗h5 11.♘f1 ♖e8 12.♘g3** 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♘g3 ♕d7 14.♘h4 ♔h8 15.♔g2 ♘e7?! 16.g5 ♘fg8 17.♕g4 ♕xg4 18.hxg4 a5 19.♖h1+– (Halmeenmaeki-Buchhauser, ICCF email 2000) is also good. **12…♗g6 13.♘h4 ♘xe4 14.♖xe4! ♗xe4 15.♕g4 ♗xd3 16.♘h5 g5 17.♕f3 ♔h8 18.♕xd3 gxh4 19.♕f5 ♖g8** and now Kindermann should have played 20.♗xf7!N (Emms) +–;

B2) **8…♕d7 9.♖e1 h5 10.♘f1 h4** (Siamidis-Vlahopoulos, Athens 1999).

analysis diagram

White is better here too, but some care is required now:
11.h3!N Black's …h4-h3 should be stopped. **11…♗h5** 11…♗xh3? 12.gxh3 ♕xh3 13.♘g5 ♕g4+ 14.♕xg4 ♘xg4 15.♘e3+–. **12.♗g5 0-0-0 13.♗a4 ♖dg8 14.b4 ♗a7 15.b5 axb5 16.♗xb5 ♘h7 17.♗e3 ♗xe3 18.♖xe3 ♘g5 19.♕a4 ♘xf3+ 20.♖xf3! ♔d8 21.♖e3 g5 22.f3±**

8.♗b3 ♗g4

Black wants to keep the king's options open.

9.♖e1 ♕d7 10.♘f1 0-0-0

A) **10…0-0N 11.h3 ♗e6** Usually Black is to move in this position. 11…♗h5 12.♗g5 ♔h8 13.♘g3 ♗g6 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♘h4±. **12.♗g5** 12.♗c2!?. **12…♗xb3 13.♕xb3±**;

B) 10…h5N 11.h3±.

11.♗e3 ♗e6

Now after 11…♗xe3N 12.♘xe3 h5

analysis diagram

White can play 13.h3, as White is quicker, e.g. 13…♗xf3 (13…♗e6 14.♗xe6 ♕xe6 15.b4 d5 16.♘g5 ♕d7 17.a4±; 13…♗xh3? 14.gxh3 ♕xh3 15.♘g5 ♕h4 16.♘xf7 ♘g4 17.♕f3+–) 14.♕xf3 ♘e7 15.d4 ♘g6 16.♘f5 ♖h7 17.♖ad1±.

12.♗xa7

12.♗xe6!?N fxe6 13.b4 ♗xe3 14.♘xe3 g5 15.a4 g4 16.♘d2 h5 17.b5 ♘b8 18.♖b1±. White's attack seems much faster.

12...♘xa7 13.d4 ♗xb3 14.♕xb3 exd4 15.cxd4

15.e5!?N.

15...♖he8

(Iwanesko-Jeanjean, Pau 2008)

16.♘g3N ♕b5 17.♕c3±

White has the better position because of his nice centre and much better attacking chances against the opposing king.

It turns out that the early pin with …♗g4 is not usually dangerous, and if Black castles queenside White's counterplay in the centre or on the queenside is faster than Black's kingside play. If Black plays 7…♗g4 first then White can attack the bishop on c5 immediately with 8.b4 and follow up with 9.a4. Conversely, if Black decides to retreat the bishop to a7 first and then follow up with 8… ♗g4, it's important to wait before playing h2-h3 and to make other useful moves, so as not to give Black too early a target to attack on the kingside.

5.1.2 – Black tries to get in …g7-g5 or …h7-h5

This plan is usually too ambitious, but White must be careful when playing h2-h3:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 ♗a7 7.♘bd2 d6 8.♗b3 h6

8…♘g4?! 9.h3 h5?! is also too naive to work for real:

analysis diagram

10.♘c4 White should not play 10.hxg4? hxg4 and now Black's attack is very dangerous. **10...♕f6 11.d4!?** White sacrifices a pawn to exploit his lead in development. **11...exd4 12.cxd4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗e3**

analysis diagram

White's compensation is more than sufficient, for example: **14...♗e5** 14...♗xe3 15.fxe3 ♕h6 16.hxg4 hxg4 17.♔f2±. **15.♕d2 ♗h2+ 16.♔h1 ♕e7 17.♗g5 f6 18.e5!!** A fantastic move based on White's lead in development. **18...♗xe5** 18...dxe5N 19.f3+–. **19.f4! ♗e6 20.fxe5 ♘xe5 21.♗a4+ ♘d7 22.♗f4+–** (Slawinski-Krol, ICCF email 2009). The threat is 22...♗xc4 23.♖fe1 ♗e6 24.♖xe6 ♕xe6 25.♖e1+–.

9.♖e1

9.h3? g5 10.♘h2? runs into 10...g4 11.hxg4 ♖g8! with a strong attack in Pruijssers-Cuenca Jimenez, Germany Bundesliga 2014/15.

9...g5 10.♘f1 g4 11.♘3d2 h5

A) 11...♘h5 12.♘c4 ♘f4 13.d4 ♕f6 14.♗xf4! ♕xf4 15.♘fe3 ♘e7 (Zude-Zell, Hessen 1989) 16.g3N ♕f6 17.dxe5 dxe5 18.♖f1 h5 19.♘d5 ♘xd5 20.♕xd5±. White wins the pawn on e5;

B) **11...♗e6 12.♘c4 ♕d7 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♘cxe3 ♗xb3 15.axb3 h5 16.b4 ♘e7 17.♕b3** 17.c4±. **17...0-0** (Atlas-Georgiadis, Switzerland tt 2014) **18.♘g3N ♘g6 19.♕c2 ♘f4 20.d4±**;

C) 11...b5 12.♘e3 h5 13.♘df1 h4 14.♘d5 g3 (Mkrtchian-Turova, St Petersburg Ech-W 2009) 15.♗e3N gxf2+ 16.♗xf2 ♗xf2+ 17.♔xf2±.

12.♘c4 h4 13.♗e3 h3

The most dangerous.

A) 13...♗xe3 14.♘cxe3 ♗d7 (Minasian-Aleksandrov, URS tt 1990) 15.d4N h3 16.g3±;

B) 13...♕e7 14.♗xa7 ♘xa7 15.d4 ♗e6 16.dxe5 dxe5 (Erdogdu-Skytte, Plovdiv tt 2010) 17.♘a5!?N b6 18.♘c4 ♖g8 19.♘ce3±. Black has to live with his king stuck in the centre and there is no attack in sight.

14.g3 d5

(Padmini-Muzychuk, Gibraltar 2016)

15.exd5!N

This leads to a clear advantage for White. After 15.♘cd2? d4 Muzychuk had the upper hand and went on to win.

15...♕xd5 16.f3 gxf3

16...♕xf3 17.♕xf3 gxf3 18.♗xa7 ♖xa7 19.♘xe5±.

17.♕d2! ♘g4

17...f2+ 18.♕xf2 ♕g2+ (18...♘g4 19.♘xe5!!+– transposes to the main line) 19.♕xg2 hxg2 20.♘fd2 ♗xe3+ 21.♘xe3 ♗h3 22.♘f3±.

18.♘xe5!!

The winning move, which is difficult to find in advance.

18...f2+

A) 18...♗xe3+ 19.♖xe3! ♕xe5 20.d4!+–;

B) 18...♘xe3 19.♗xd5 ♘c4+ 20.d4 ♘xd2 21.♘xc6++–.

19.♕xf2! ♘xf2

19...♕g2+ 20.♕xg2 hxg2 21.♘xg4 gxf1♕+ 22.♔xf1 ♗xg4 23.♗xa7+ ♔d7 24.♗g1+–.

20.♗xd5 ♘xe5 21.♗xf2 ♗xf2+ 22.♔xf2 ♖h5 23.d4 ♗e6 24.♗xb7 ♖b8 25.♖xe5 ♖xe5 26.♗c6+ ♔e7 27.dxe5+–

Black's idea of attacking on the kingside without castling is dangerous but objectively dubious. White should take care not to play h2-h3 before Black has castled kingside, as in Pruijssers-Cuenca Jimenez. In general White should regroup his pieces, play in the centre

and exchange the dark-squared bishops. He should also watch out for the weakened squares d5 and f5, where he can place his knights. In the main game White has to memorise the novelty 15.exd5! and the subsequent winning move 18.♘xe5!!. Admittedly Black is probably not going to repeat Muzychuk's direct attack, as it leads to a nearly winning advantage for White.

5.2 – Black aims for …f7-f5

Usually this plan is too ambitious, but a few details are worth knowing. Black can implement the plan in three principal ways: by driving White's bishop from the a2-g8 diagonal, by …♗e6 or by unpinning the f-pawn by …♔h8. But usually this attack on the wing can be met by a timely d3-d4 central advance.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 a6

The direct approach **7…♔h8** is played very rarely due to **8.b4** and Black's bishop has problems, e.g. **8…♗b6 9.♗b3 ♘g8 10.♘c4 f5** (Saltaev-Cuenca Jimenez, Germany Bundesliga 2014/15) **11.a4!?N a6 12.♘xb6 cxb6 13.♖e1 f4** 13…fxe4 14.♘g5 ♕c7 15.♘xe4±. **14.h3 g5 15.♘h2 ♘f6 16.d4** The typical central advance. **16…♕c7 17.♗b2±**. Objectively Black's chances on the kingside don't outweigh White's better control of the centre.

8.♗b3 ♗a7

Now 8…♔h8 can be met by 9.♘c4!? (9.h3 is also playable of course) 9…♗a7 10.h3 ♘g8 (without this move 8…♔h8 makes hardly any sense) 11.d4 (the typical central advance) 11…f5 12.exf5 exd4 13.♗g5 ♘f6 (Lendwai-Kotz, Austria Bundesliga 2004/05) 14.g4!?N b5 15.♘cd2 dxc3 16.bxc3 ♗b7 17.♘e4 ♘a5 18.♗d5 ♗xd5 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.♕xd5±.

9.h3

An important point. After 9.♖e1?! Black can implement his plan very actively with 9…♘g4 10.♖e2 ♔h8 11.h3 ♘h6 (even the direct 11…f5!? is an option) 12.♘f1 f5 with strong counterplay, as proven in many games.

9…♔h8

Now this king move, which prepares … f7-f5 after a move of the king's knight, is played more often. But the plan is still quite slow. After 9…♘d7 10.♖e1 ♘c5 11.♗c2 f5?N (11…♘e6 is the main move – see Chapter 5.3) 12.d4!, the central advance makes White's advantage in development felt by opening the game.

analysis diagram

12…exd4 13.cxd4 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♗xe4 d5 16.♕b3 ♔h8 17.♗xd5 ♘xd4 18.♘xd4 c6 19.♗f3 ♗xd4 20.♗e3± ♖xf3!? 21.♖ad1! ♗xh3 22.♕xb7!.

For 9…♗e6 10.♖e1 ♘d7, to enable …f7-f5, see Chapter 8.1.2.

10.♖e1 ♘g8

A) **10…♘h5 11.♘f1**:

analysis diagram

A1) **11…f5? 12.♘g5 ♕e8?** 12…g6N 13.♘f7+ ♖xf7 14.♗xf7 fxe4 15.♗d5 ♕f6 16.♖e2±. **13.♗f7! ♖xf7 14.♕xh5 g6 15.♘xf7+ ♕xf7** (Hou Yifan-Kosteniuk, Beijing blitz 2008) **16.♕f3!N f4 17.♗e3±**;

A2) **11…♕f6 12.♘e3 ♘f4?** 12…♕g6N 13.♘f5 ♘f4 14.♗xf4 exf4 15.♕d2 ♗xf5 16.exf5 ♕xf5 17.d4 is a typical situation where the pawn chain b2/c3/d4 excludes the black pieces on the queenside from the action. 17…♖ae8 18.♗a4 and White has more than enough compensation for the pawn. **13.♘d5 ♕g6 14.♗xf4 exf4 15.d4±** Hegarty-Al Khulaifi, Istanbul ol W 2012.

B) Against **10…♘d7** we suggest:

B1) **11.♗c2N 11…f5?!** 11…♘c5 12.d4±; 11…♘f6 12.♘f1 d5 13.♗g5±. **12.exf5 ♖xf5 13.d4 ♖f8 14.♘e4 ♘f6 15.♘xf6 ♕xf6 16.♗g5 ♕f7 17.♗e3±**;

B2) After the natural **11.♘f1** Black can play the …f7-f5 plan: **11…♘c5 12.♗c2 f5** (Sariego-Leyva, Las Tunas 1996) **13.♗g5N ♘e7 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.d4** 15.♘g3 ♘e6 **15…♗xc2 16.♕xc2 ♖xf3 17.gxf3 ♘e6 18.♕d2 ♕e8** and matters are not clear. We do not like the fact that Black can execute the plan here.

11.♘f1 f5 12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.d4

The central advance comes and is an example of the guideline that a premature wing attack should be met by a central counterstrike. **13.♘g3** is also playable, but there is a line

where Black is probably able to equalise

A) **13…♗g6 14.d4**:

A1) **14…exd4 15.cxd4 ♘f6 16.♗e3 ♕d7 17.d5 ♘e7 18.♗xa7 ♖xa7** (Sikula-Vajda, Slovakia tt 2008/09) **19.♘e2!?N ♗f7 20.♘f4±**;

A2) 14…h6!N (because of this strong novelty we prefer 13.d4) 15.♗e3 e4 16.♘h2 d5 17.a4 ♕d6 18.♕d2 ♘ge7 19.♘e2 ♖f7 20.♗f4 ♕d7 21.♗g3 ♖af8 22.a5 ♔h7 23.♘g4 ♗h5!=.

B) **13…d5** (Klinger-Jonkman, Cappelle-la-Grande 1994) **14.♗e3N ♗xe3 15.♖xe3 ♕d6 16.♕e2 ♖ae8 17.♘xf5 ♖xf5 18.♘d4 ♖ff8 19.♘xc6 ♕xc6** 19…bxc6 20.♖e1 ♖f7 21.f4! ♖xf4 22.♖xe5±. **20.♖xe5 ♖xf2 21.♖xe8 ♖xe2 22.♖xe2±**. White has no weaknesses, so the black queen will be unable to attack anything here, whereas White should be able to attack the black pawns in the long run.

13…exd4 14.cxd4 ♕f6 15.♗g5 ♕g6

(Ursic-Mar, Areh 2001)

16.♘g3N ♗xd4 17.♘xd4 ♘xd4 18.♕xd4 ♕xg5 19.♖ac1 c6

A) 19…♖ac8? 20.h4 ♕h6 21.♗xg8 ♔xg8 22.♕d5+ ♔h8 23.♘xf5+–;

B) 19…♖ae8 20.♗xg8 ♖xg8 21.♕d5 ♖e5 22.♕xb7±.

20.♕xd6 ♗g6 21.♖cd1±

White has perfectly placed pieces and still some activity with his heavy artillery in the centre. Black's plan with …♔h8 and …f7-f5 is usually too ambitious if it cannot be implemented by …♘g4 followed by …f7-f5, as it is quite slow and White's central play after a timely d3-d4 is as a rule too strong. Remember the move order 9.h3!? instead of 9.♖e1?!.

5.3 – Black plays …♘f6-d7-c5-e6

This regrouping is slow, but not without merit, as Black wants to stop d3-d4 and make …♘f4 and …♕f6 possible. White has to act precisely to get an advantage and d3-d4 can usually only be played after a lot of preparation.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 a6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 9.h3 ♘d7

Black starts the regrouping directly.

10.♖e1 ♘c5 11.♗c2 ♘e6 12.♘f1

Now Black has tried several moves, but the set-up is so slow that White should be slightly better in all cases:

12…♕f6

A) 12…b5 13.♘g3 ♘e7 (Muniz-Ibanez, Montevideo ch-URU 2016) 14.a4!?N c5 15.axb5 axb5 16.♗e3 ♗b7 17.♗b3 ♘g6 18.♘f5±;

B) 12…♗d7 (Bosboom-Adams, Ostend 1991) 13.♗e3N ♗xe3 14.♘xe3 ♘g5 15.♘d2 h6 16.♘df1 ♔h8 17.h4 ♘h7 18.g3 ♘f6 19.d4±.

13.♘e3 ♗xe3

This is a concession, but 14.♘d5 was a nasty threat. 13…♘e7?? 14.♘g4 ♕g6 15.♘h4 ♕h5 16.♘f6+ wins the queen.

14.♗xe3 ♘e7

(Böwer-Winants, Willingen 1999); 14…♘f4 (Vaibhav-Shyam, Mumbai 2008) 15.d4N ♖e8 16.♗xf4 ♕xf4 17.♖e3±.

15.♔h2!?N ♘g6 16.d4 h6 17.g3±

Black's plan is very slow and slightly clumsy, but also solid. So White gains a slight initiative, but no more than that. White doesn't really need to remember many things here. He plays natural moves and prepares a timely d3-d4. After that he enjoys his space advantage.

5.4 – Black keeps the ♗c5

In this chapter we will see what happens if Black keeps the bishop on c5. In Chapter 5.4.1 he does it without even advancing the a-pawn, whereas in Chapter 5.4.2 he first plays … a7-a6. This is a move order favoured by Kramnik.

5.4.1 – Without …a7-a6

This is very rare and dubious. White can play on the queenside with a quick b2-b4. This is quite dangerous, as ♘c4 often follows with gain of time.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0

6…♗e6 7.♗xe6 fxe6 8.b4 ♗b6 9.♘bd2 a6 10.♘c4 ♗a7 11.a4 and White has won a tempo over the lines in Chapter 5.4.2.

For 6…a6 see Chapter 5.4.2.

7.♘bd2 ♗e6 8.b4 ♗b6

8…♗xc4?! 9.♘xc4 ♗b6 10.a4 a6 10…a5 11.b5 ♘e7 12.♗g5±. **11.♗g5 h6 12.♗h4± g5? 13.♘xg5! hxg5 14.♗xg5+– ♔g7** 14…♖e8 15.♕f3 ♖e6 16.♘e3 ♘b8 17.♕g3+–. **15.♘xb6 cxb6 16.f4+–**.

9.♗xe6 fxe6 10.♕b3

White's quick play on the queenside is not easy to neutralise:

10…♕d7

A) 10…d5N 11.a4 a6 12.♗a3±;

B) **10…♕e7 11.a4 a5?!** 11…a6 12.♘c4±. **12.b5 ♘d8 13.d4 exd4 14.cxd4±** (Jacobsen-Silies, GER email 2009);

C) 10…♕e8N 11.♘c4 ♘d7 12.a4 a6 13.♘xb6 ♘xb6 14.♗e3 ♘d7 15.♘g5 ♖f6 16.♘h3 h6 17.f3 ♘f8 18.d4 ♘g6 19.♖a2±.

11.♘c4 ♔h8

11...a6N 12.♘xb6 cxb6 13.a4 b5 14.♗e3 ♘h5 15.axb5 axb5 16.c4 bxc4 17.dxc4 ♘f6 18.b5 ♖xa1 19.♖xa1 ♘d8 20.♘d2±.

12.a4 a6 13.♘xb6 cxb6 14.♗e3 b5 15.h3 bxa4 16.♕xa4 ♖ae8

17.♖fb1!?N

17.b5 axb5 18.♕xb5 d5 19.♗c5 ♖f7? 19...♖g8N 20.♖fe1± **20.♘g5+–** Hager-Miller, playchess.com 2007.

17...h6 18.b5 axb5 19.♖xb5 d5 20.♕b3 ♖f7 21.♕b1±

White has a lasting initiative on the queenside. If Black keeps his bishop on c5 and wants to do without ...a7-a6 White gets the advantage by pushing his queenside pawns. With ♘c4 he gains further time for the initiative on that side of the board. White scores very well in this line.

5.4.2 – with ...a7-a6

This is much more circumspect, and favored by Vladimir Kramnik. White can meet the black idea ...♗c8-e6xb3 in three ways: by retreating the bishop to c2, by allowing the exchange on b3 or by exchanging on e6. Here we will focus on the latter. For a strategy with ♗c2, see Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter, while allowing the exchange on b3 is dealt with in Chapter 8.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 a6 7.♗b3

For 7.a4 see Chapter 9.4.2.

7...♗e6

7...h6 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♖e1 White should play 9.h3!? and if the bishop retreats then after 9...♗e6 10.♗c2; 9.♘c4 is the other main option. **9...♗e6** is another move order used by Kramnik.

8.♘bd2

8.♗c2!? ♗a7 8...d5 9.exd5 ♕xd5 10.♘bd2 0-0 11.h3 h6 12.♖e1 ♖ad8 13.♕e2 ♖fe8 14.b4 ♗a7 15.a4± (Mergard-Hudak, ICCF email 2008) **9.♘bd2 0-0 10.h3** transposes to Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter.

8...0-0 9.♖e1

9.♗c2 is again possible.

Our main suggestion against this move order is 9.h3 – see Chapter 8.1.3.2.2.

9...h6

A) 9...♘g4 is met by 10.♖e2;

B) Aronian's answer is **9...♖e8** and here maybe **10.♗xe6!?** is interesting as well, and should probably be chosen now, e.g. **10...fxe6** 10...♖xe6 11.b4 ♗a7 12.a4 d5 13.♕c2 d4 14.♗b2±. **11.♘f1 ♗a7 12.♗e3 ♗xe3 13.♘xe3 ♕d7 14.h3 ♖f8 15.♕e2 b5 16.a4 ♘e7**

17.axb5 axb5 18.b4± (Maslak-Gavrilov, Olomouc 2005). (For the main move 10.♘f1 see Chapter 8.1.3.2.1.)

Kramnik played this position several times in 2015, sometimes using the move order 7…h6. White has several options, and we suggest the following:

10.♗xe6!?

There are only a few games with this move, which gives White a bit of a structural edge. He shouldn't fear the opening of the f-file, as the following game shows.

10.h3 and **10.♘f1** are the main moves, but here they are a little slow as Black has saved the move …♗c5-a7 – see Chapter 8.2.2.1. By the way, after 10.h3 ♖e8, 11.♗xe6 is a major option again, e.g. 11…♖xe6 12.b4 ♗a7 13.a4 d5 14.♕c2 d4 15.♗b2 dxc3 16.♗xc3 ♘d4 17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 (Salgado Lopez-Adams, Gibraltar 2013) 18.♖ac1N c6 19.♘b3±.

Note that **10.♗c2?** is a mistake now due to **10…♘g4 11.♖e2 ♗xf2+ 12.♖xf2 ♘e3 13.♕e2 ♘xc2 14.♖b1 ♗xa2 15.b3 ♗xb1 16.♘xb1 ♘a1 17.♕b2 ♘xb3 18.♕xb3**, and Black is for choice.

10…fxe6 11.b4 ♗a7 12.♘f1

White will play ♗e3 and take on a7, or move the knight to e3 and then play on the queenside and act prophylactically on the kingside:

12…♕e8 13.a4 ♘e7 14.♗e3

Maybe White can even do without exchanging the bishops immediately: 14.d4!?N.

14…♗xe3 15.♘xe3 ♘g6 16.♖a2

A) 16.g3!?N;

B) 16.♘d2N ♘f4 17.♘b3 ♕g6 18.♖a2 d5 19.f3 is possible too.

16…♖d8 17.♖d2 ♕f7 18.♔h1 b5

18…♘f4N looks equal here.

19.♕c2 ♘f4 20.axb5 axb5 21.♘g1 d5 22.f3 ♕d7 23.♘f1 d4

23…♕c6N seems better.

24.g3 ♘g6 25.♖c1 ♖a8 26.cxd4 ♕xd4 27.♕c5

27.♕b3!?N.

27…♕xc5 28.♖xc5 ♖fb8 29.♖xc7 ♖a4 30.♖b2±

(Vocaturo-Kramnik, Doha 2015) In the course of the game there are many possibilities to deviate for both sides. But in general White's structure is a bit better after 10.♗xe6!? and with very precise play this should be a slight edge. In the past White has refrained from taking on e6, but as in other similar positions he doesn't have to worry about the opening of the f-file – see the main line in Chapter 3.3, for example. More practical tests are needed here to find out how large White's edge is.

5.4.3 – Black plays …a7-a5

If Black wants to keep his bishop on c5 for a long time, then ideas with b2-b4 can be dangerous if Black does nothing on the queenside. So …a7-a5 has been suggested and played, for example, by Parligras and Tomashevsky. Actually this move is also a favourite of the engines. We suggest meeting this as follows:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 a5!?

As mentioned above, this is a favourite of the engines. One reason could be that they like to grab space whenever possible.

8.h3

8.a4 was played by Vishwanathan Anand in a rapid game against Anish Giri. After **8…♗e6 9.♗xe6 fxe6 10.♘c4 ♕e8 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.♘xe3 b6 13.♖e1 ♖d8 14.♕e2 ♕f7 15.♘d2 d5 16.♘c2 ♖d7 17.♘f3** the game was equal but Black blundered a pawn with **17…♖e8?** (17…♘h5!N 18.♘g5 ♕g6 19.♘h3 dxe4 20.dxe4 ♘f4 21.♘xf4 exf4=) because after **18.b4!** he couldn't defend the weak pawn on e5: **18…♕h5 19.exd5 ♘xd5 20.b5 ♘d8 21.♕xe5±** Anand-Giri, Leuven rapid 2016.

8…♗e6

9.b3!?

An interesting concept to deal with the problem. White wants to take back on c4 with the b-pawn.

A) Another way to deal with the problem of the ♗c4 is the move **9.♖e1**, which is also good, but Areschenko's approach counters Black's idea in a more principled way: **9…h6** After 9…♕d7 10.♗b5 Black has 10…♗xh3 11.gxh3 ♕xh3 but the compensation is doubtful, e.g. 12.♘f1 ♕g4+ 13.♔h1 ♕h3+ 14.♘3h2 ♗xf2 15.♖e2 ♘g4 16.♖c2 f5 (Artemiev-Tomashevsky, Russia tt 2016) 17.exf5N ♘xh2 18.♘xh2 ♕xf5 19.♕g4±. **10.♗b5** See for example the following recent high-level game, where Sergey Karjakin slowly outplayed his opponent: **10…♗a7** 10…♕b8!?N 11.♘f1 ♕a7 12.♗e3 ♕b6 13.a4

♗xe3 14.♘xe3 ♘e7 followed by …c7-c6 is given by Bologan. The position after 15.d4 requires further investigation. **11.♘f1 ♘e7 12.♘g3 c6 13.♗a4 ♘g6 14.♗c2 ♕c7 15.d4 ♖ad8 16.♗e3 ♗b8 17.♗d3 ♖fe8 18.♕c2 ♕e7 19.♖ad1 ♗c7 20.c4 ♗c8 21.a3 exd4?! 22.♘xd4 ♕f8 23.f4 ♘d7 24.♕f2 ♘f6 25.♘f3 ♖e7 26.♔h1 ♔h8 27.♗c2 ♖ee8 28.b4 axb4 29.axb4 d5?! 30.e5 ♘e4 31.♗xe4 dxe4 32.♖xd8 ♖xd8 33.♗c5 ♕e8 34.♖xe4 ♘e7 35.♘d4 b6 36.♗d6 ♗xd6 1-0** Karjakin-Tomashevsky, Wijk aan Zee 2016;

B) 9.♗b5 is the other main move;

C) 9.a4, by the way, is favoured by the engines in the 'ChessBase Let's Check' feature at the moment, and is a third option for White.

9...d5

A) 9…♗xc4N 10.bxc4 a4 11.♖e1 ♕b8 12.♘f1 ♕a7 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♘xe3 ♘e7 15.♖b1 ♘g6 16.g3± is not what Black wants;

B) **9…♕d7N 10.♖e1 ♗xh3?! 11.gxh3 ♕xh3 12.♘f1 ♕g4+** 12…♘g4 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♘xe3±; 12…♗xf2+? 13.♔xf2 ♘g4+ 14.♔g1+–. **13.♔h1 ♗xf2 14.♘1h2 ♕h5 15.♖e2 ♗g3 16.♖g2±**;

C) **9…♘h5N** is favoured by the engines, but White should have a slight edge here as well, e.g. **10.♖e1 ♕f6 11.♘f1 a4 12.b4 ♗b6 13.♘e3 ♗xe3 14.♗xe3**

analysis diagram

14…♗xc4 14…♘f4 15.♗xf4 ♕xf4 16.♗xe6 fxe6 17.♖e3±. **15.dxc4 ♕e6** 15…♘f4 16.g3 ♘e6 17.♘h4±. **16.♕d5 ♘f6 17.♕xe6 fxe6 18.♘d2±**;

D) 9…h6N 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♗b5 ♗d7 12.♗b2 ♗a7 13.d4±.

10.exd5 ♗xd5

10…♘xd5N 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.♘fg5 ♕d7 13.♘xe6 ♕xe6 14.♕f3 ♖ad8 15.♖e1 ♖d7 16.♗e3 f5 17.♘c5 ♗xc5 18.♗xc5 ♖e8 19.♖e2±.

11.♕c2 ♖e8 12.♖e1 ♕d6 13.♗b2 ♖ad8 14.♖ad1

14...♗xc4?

This runs into a powerful blow. **14...♕f8N** is called for, e.g. **15.a4 h6** Jonas Lampert suggests 15...♗xc4 16.bxc4 (16.♘xc4 e4!=) 16...b6 with equality, but White's position is probably easier to play, e.g. 17.♗c1 h6 18.♘h4 ♕d6 19.♘b3 and objectively it is probably indeed equal in the computer's view, but the position is in the spirit of our recommended repertoire. **16.♘h4 ♖e6 17.♘f5±**

15.♘xc4 ♕d5 16.♘cxe5! ♘xe5 17.♖xe5 ♖xe5 18.c4 ♕xf3

Otherwise White is just a pawn up.

19.gxf3 ♗d4 20.♗xd4 ♖xd4 21.♕c3 ♖g5+ 22.♔f1 ♖h4 23.♖e1 ♖xh3 24.♖e5 ♖h1+ 25.♔e2 ♖gg1 26.♕xa5 h5

And now instead of

27.♖g5?!

after which White went on to win in (Areschenko-Parligras, Al Ain 2015) anyway, 27.♕xc7N is stronger, e.g. 27...h4 28.♖b5 ♘e8 29.♕xb7 h3 30.♖h5 h2 31.♕b8+–. Areschenko's approach deals with the problems on the queenside in an original way and should give White a pleasant position. If Black takes the bishop on c4 usually the b-pawn recaptures to give White more influence in the centre and a slight space advantage. This 7...a5!? idea could open up a new theoretical branch, as in our computer era people tend to play what the computer suggests. There are probably many more games coming in the future.

5.5 – Black plays ...♗b6

Black can also solve the problem of his dark-squared bishop by this retreat. Often the typical ...♘c6-e7-g6 will follow. One disadvantage is that White now has ♘c4 ideas to halve Black's complement of bishops.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 ♗b6

6.0-0

6.b4 transposes to the Evans Gambit Declined and can also be played.
In the spirit of Chapter 9.4 White can also play 6.a4 here.

6...d6

6...0-0 7.♘bd2 d6 8.♗b3 transposes.

7.♗b3

7.a4!? is very interesting here, again in the spirit of Chapter 9.4.

7...0-0

7...♘e7 8.♘bd2 ♘g6 8...c6 9.d4 ♗c7 10.♖e1 ♘g6 11.♘f1 0-0 12.♘g3± (Tiviakov-Giorgadze, Podolsk 1992); 8...0-0 9.♖e1 and we have reached Chapter 6.2. 9.♘c4 is the principal alternative. **9.♘c4 0-0 10.a4 c6 11.♘xb6 axb6**. White's pair of bishops should

give him a slight edge:

analysis diagram

12.h3 b5 13.♗e3 bxa4 14.♖xa4 ♖xa4 15.♗xa4 h6 (Sakelsek-Tomazini, Graz 2010, went 15…♗e6 16.♗c2 ♕e7 17.d4±) **16.♗c2N ♗e6 17.d4±**

8.♘bd2 ♗e6

8…♘e7 transposes to Chapter 6.2.

9.♘c4 h6 10.a4 ♖e8

11.♖e1

Emms prefers David Bronstein's original 11.♗c2!? from Bronstein-Ivkov, Amsterdam 1968, when 11…♗xc4N 12.dxc4 is critical and needs practical tests.

11...♗c5

11…♘g4 12.♘e3 ♘xe3 13.♗xe3 ♕d7 14.♗xe6 ♕xe6 15.b4 ♗xe3 16.♖xe3±.

12.a5 ♘g4 13.♘e3 ♗xe3

And Movsesian-Morozevich, Sarajevo 2008, was agreed drawn. White might be very slightly better as usual in these structures, e.g.

14.♗xe3 ♗xb3 15.♕xb3 b6 16.axb6 axb6 17.h3 ♘xe3 18.fxe3 ♘a5 19.♕a2 ♘c6 20.♕d5 ♘a5 21.b4 c6 22.♕a2 ♘b7 23.♕b3±

Conclusion

Against an early …♗b6 early a2-a4 plans in the spirit of Chapter 9.4 come strongly into consideration. Our main set-up is also playable, of course, but White's initiative is only very slight in several cases.

Chapter 6
The knight transfer to g6

Black just wants to mirror our strategy by immediately transferring the knight from c6 to the kingside. Black's knight is slightly misplaced on c6 as the pawn on c3 limits its options, and from g6 it can also jump into f4 sooner or later. Black can do this directly or prepare it by …♗b6 or …a7-a6 followed by …♗a7. But the plan needs a lot of time, which White can use to transfer the queen's knight to g3 and to achieve d3-d4.

6.1 – The direct knight transfer

Sergey Karjakin has played this plan on a few occasions, so it should not be underestimated. We suggest meeting it by using the following move order, which is our main recommendation anyway:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0

6...0-0

The direct **6…♘e7** can also be met by **7.d4 ♗b6?!** 7…exd4N 8.cxd4 ♗b6 9.♘c3±. **8.dxe5 ♘xe4 9.♕a4+ ♔f8** (Moller-Abersten, Gothenburg 1901, went 9…c6N 10.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 11.♕xe4 ♗f5 12.♕f4±) **10.♗xf7N ♘c5 11.♕f4 ♘d3 12.♕c4±**.

7.♘bd2

7.h3 ♘e7 8.♖e1 ♘g6 9.♘bd2 c6 10.♘f1 d5 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♘g3 h6 was played in Ivanchuk-Karjakin, Medias 2011 and now Viorel Iordachescu's suggestion 13.♘h5!?N is well worth taking a close look at.

7...♘e7

After this retreat White has the opportunity to act immediately in the centre:

8.d4!?

As now the pawn must be captured and Black cannot achieve his aim. Of course the normal 8.♖e1 and 8.♗b3 are also playable.

8...exd4

8...♗b6?N just loses a pawn to 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♘xe5.

9.cxd4 ♗b6

9...♗b4?!N 10.e5 dxe5 11.dxe5 ♘fd5 12.♘e4 ♗f5 13.♕e2 plays into White's hands.

10.e5 dxe5

Black has two alternatives here:

A) **10...♘fd5 11.♘e4 ♗g4 12.♗g5 ♕d7** (Katz-Francisco, ICC 2014) **13.h3N ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 dxe5 15.dxe5 c6 16.♖ad1 ♘g6 17.♖fe1 ♖ae8** 17...♘xe5 18.♘f6+ ♘xf6 19.♖xe5 ♘d5 20.♗xd5 cxd5 21.♗f6 ♕c6 22.♖g5 g6 23.♖gxd5±. **18.♗xd5 cxd5 19.♘d6 ♖xe5 20.♖xe5 ♘xe5 21.♕xd5 ♘c6 22.b3 ♕e6 23.♕xe6 fxe6 24.♗h4 g5 25.♗g3 ♖d8 26.♖e1 e5 27.♘e4 h6 28.h4 gxh4 29.♗xh4 ♖d4 30.♗g3 ♔f7 31.♔h2 ♗a5 32.♖e2 ♔g6 33.f3±**;

B) 10...♘e8 (Weiss-Vajda, Eger 1993) 11.a4N a5 12.♗e2 d5 13.♘b3 c6 14.♗e3±.

11.dxe5 ♘fd5

11...♘d7? (Avelar-Sanchez, San Salvador 2008) **12.e6N fxe6 13.♘g5 ♘f6 14.♗xe6+ ♔h8 15.♕b3 ♗d7** 15...♘g4 16.♗xc8 ♘xf2 17.♘f7+ ♖xf7 18.♕xf7+–. **16.♘df3 ♘c6 17.♗d2+–**

12.♘e4 ♗f5

12...♗e6N 13.♘fg5!?↑.

13.♘g3 ♗g6 14.♘h4

14.♕b3!?N.

14...c6

Here we suggest:

15.♔h1!?N

But **15.♗g5** is also interesting, e.g. **15...♕c7 16.♕e2 ♖ae8 17.♖ae1 h6 18.♗d2 ♗d4?! 19.♔h1 b5 20.♗b3 ♗h7 21.f4** 21.♗xh6!?N. **21...f6 22.♘f3 fxe5 23.fxe5 ♕b6 24.♗a5** 24.♘xd4N ♖xf1+ 25.♖xf1 ♕xd4 26.♗c3 ♕h4 27.♕f2 ♔h8 28.♕xa7±. **24...♕xa5 25.♘xd4 ♔h8 26.♘xc6 ♘xc6 27.♗xd5 ♘d4 28.♕g4±** Hracek-Swiercz, Poland tt 2015.

15...♕d7

15...♘c7 16.♗g5 ♕xd1 17.♖axd1 ♘ed5 18.♗d2±.

16.f4 ♘f5 17.♘hxf5

17.♕g4!? also looks good.

17...♗xf5 18.♕b3 ♖ad8

18...f6 19.♘xf5 ♕xf5 20.♗d2 fxe5 21.♗xd5+ cxd5 22.♕xd5+ ♕f7 23.♕xe5±.

19.♗d2 ♖fe8 20.a4±

We can see that the immediate knight transfer 7...♘e7 has the disadvantage that it allows the dangerous direct 8.d4!. So most often Black prepares the knight transfer, as we will see in the next chapters.

6.2 – Black plays ...♗b6 first

Black often takes the time to prepare the knight transfer. First we look at ...♗b6, as a rule followed later by ...c7-c6, and in the following Chapter (6.3) we deal with ...a7-a6 followed by ...♗a7. Black has many different move orders to reach the position before 13.d4, but White as a rule can just follow the main set-up plan. If Black does not play ...h7-h6 then ♗g5 is often an option.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 ♗b6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♗b3 ♘e7 9.♖e1

We follow our main set-up plan. 9.♘c4!? is played much more often and might be an even better way against this move order. We take a look at some interesting lines in the game Kovalev-Nosov, Alushta 2008, in the Strategy chapter.

9...♘g6

9...c6 10.♘f1 ♘g6 11.♘g3 transposes to 10...c6. We take a look at some interesting lines in the game Kovalec-Nosov, Alustha 2008, in the Strategy chapter.

10.♘f1

10...h6

A) **10...c6 11.♘g3 ♖e8** 11...d5N 12.♗g5±. **12.h3 ♗e6** 12...d5 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.exd5 cxd5 16.d4! ♗d7 (Bologan-Grischuk, Khanty-Mansiysk Wch blitz 2013, went 17.♘h5!N ♕d6 18.dxe5 ♘xe5 19.♗xd5±; 12...h6 transposes to the main line) **13.d4 ♗xb3 14.♕xb3**

analysis diagram

The bishop on c1 will be developed next move and White is slightly better:

A1) **14…h6 15.♗e3** 15.a4!?N. **15…♕c7** (Wang Chen-Li Wenliang, Lishui 2009, went 15…exd4N 16.♗xd4 c5 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♖ad1 ♘f4 19.c4 ♖ad8 20.♖e3±) **16.c4N ♗a5** 16…c5 17.d5±. **17.dxe5 dxe5 18.♖ed1±**;

A2) **14…d5 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗xf6 ♕xf6 17.exd5 exd4 18.cxd4 cxd5** 18…♘f4N 19.dxc6 ♕xc6 20.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21.♖d1±. **19.♕xd5 ♘h4 20.♘xh4 ♕xh4 21.♘f5 ♕f6 22.♕b5 ♖e6** (Sedina-Vajda, Budapest 2015) **23.a4!N a6** 23…♗xd4 24.♘xd4 ♕xd4 25.♕xb7±. **24.♕d5±**

B) **10…♗e6 11.♘g3**:

B1) **11…♕d7 12.♗g5 ♘g4 13.d4 ♗xb3 14.♕xb3 h6 15.♗d2 ♘f6 16.a4 a5 17.h3 ♖fe8 18.♗e3 exd4 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4 20.cxd4 c6 21.♖ad1** 21.♘d2!?N. **21…♕c7 22.♕c2 ♖ac8 23.♖e3±** Bok-Schoppen, Leiden 2016;

B2) 11…♖e8 12.h3 h6 transposes to 12….♗e6;

B3) **11…d5N 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.d4** 13.♘xe5? runs into the known counterattack 13…♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♗xf2+!. **13…exd4 14.♘xd4±**

11.♘g3 ♖e8

Black can also try to do without this move: **11…c6 12.h3 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.d4** 14.♘xe5? again runs into the typical counterattack 14…♘xe5 15.♖xe5 ♗xf2+!. **14…exd4 15.♘xd4**

analysis diagram

The position is almost symmetrical, so White's slight initiative counts for something, as Black cannot easily organise counterplay.

A) 15…♗e6 16.♗c2 ♘df4 17.♘xe6 ♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♘xe6 (Brkic-Wagner, Bad Gleichenberg 2014) 19.a4N a6 20.a5 ♗c7 21.♘e4 ♖fd8 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.g3±;

B) 15…♔h8 16.♗c2 ♖e8 17.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 18.♗d2 ♗xd4 19.cxd4 ♕e7 20.♕f3 ♗d7 21.♖e1 ♕f6 22.♕xf6 ♘xf6 (Spraggett-Bacrot, Spain tt 2013) 23.f3N ♘d5 24.♘e4±;

C) 15…♗c7 (Ivanov-Zviagintsev, Moscow 2008) 16.♕f3N ♘e5 17.♕e4±;

D) **15…♘df4 16.♕f3 ♗c7 17.♗xf4 ♘xf4 18.♖ad1** 18.♘gf5!?N. ♕f6 19.♘e7+ ♔h8 20.♘xc8 ♖axc8 21.♖ad1±. **18…♕g5 19.♘e4 ♕g6 20.♔h1 a5 21.a4 h5 22.♘g3 ♕g5 23.♗c2 g6 24.♘e4 ♕h4 25.♔g1±** Ma Qun-Li, China tt 2015.

12.h3 c6

After **12…♗e6** we give two possibilities:

A) **13.a4 a5 14.d4 ♗xb3 15.♕xb3 d5 16.exd5 exd4 17.♖xe8+**:

A1) **17…♕xe8** (Hou Yifan-Lu Shanglei, Doha 2015) **18.c4!N ♕d8 19.♘f5 c6 20.d6** 20.♗xh6!? gxh6 21.♘xh6+ ♔g7 22.♘xf7 ♔xf7 23.♘g5+ ♔g8 24.♘e6 ♕e7 25.♕xb6 cxd5 26.♘c7 ♖f8 27.♘xd5=. **20…♘d7 21.g4! ♘c5 22.♕c2 ♘e6 23.h4 ♗c5 24.h5 ♘gf4**

25.♗xf4 ♘xf4 26.♘e7+ ♔h8 27.♘e5 ♘h3+ 28.♔g2 ♘g5 29.♕f5 ♗xd6 30.♕xg5 ♕xe7 30...♕e8 31.♕f4 ♗xe7 32.♕xf7± doesn't really make any difference, as Black should exchange queens. **31.♕xe7 ♗xe7 32.♘xf7+ ♔h7 33.♘e5±** with a better endgame for White;

A2) **17...♘xe8N 18.c4 ♘d6** 18...♘f6 19.♘f5 leads to the suggested novelty after 17...♕xe8. **19.♕c2 ♕f6 20.♘h5 ♕f5 21.♕xf5 ♘xf5 22.♔f1±** with the more pleasant endgame for White.

B) **13.d4 ♗xb3** was played in Bologan-Godena, Berlin Wch rapid 2015. Here we suggest taking with the pawn: **14.axb3!?N d5** 14...♕d7 15.♗e3 exd4 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.cxd4, resulting in a slightly inferior position, is probably the best Black can get here. **15.exd5 exd4 16.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 17.c4 c6 18.dxc6 bxc6** 18...♕xc6 19.♕d3 ♖d8 20.b4 a6 21.♘f5 ♕e8 22.b3 ♗c7 23.g3±. **19.b4 ♗c7 20.♘f5 a5 21.b3 axb4 22.♖xa8 ♕xa8 23.♕xd4±**

13.d4

White is one tempo up and so can act in the centre first, which gives him a dangerous initiative.

13...♗e6

A) **13...♗d7 14.♗e3!?N** 14.♗c2 c5 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♘f5 ♗e6 17.♕e2 ♕c7 18.♘h2 c4 19.♘g4 ♘xg4 20.♕xg4 ♕d8 21.♖d1 ♕f6= Alekseev-Gelfand, Astrakhan 2010. **14...♕c7** 14...exd4 15.♘xd4± ♘xe4? 16.♘xe4 ♖xe4 17.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18.♕f3+±. **15.♕d2 exd4** 15...c5? 16.♗xh6 gxh6 17.♕xh6 c4 18.♗a4 ♗xa4 19.♘f5+–. **16.♗xd4 ♗xd4** 16...♘e5 17.♘h4 c5 18.♗e3 c4 19.♗c2±. **17.cxd4±**. This is the kind of position you are aiming for when playing the Slow Italian. White enjoys a strong centre;

B) **13...♗c7 14.♗c2** 14.♗e3!?N. **14...d5** (Bauer-Naumann, St.Veit 2013) **15.exd5N ♕xd5 16.♗xg6 fxg6 17.dxe5 ♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♗xe5 19.♘xe5 ♖xe5 20.♗e3** with a tiny endgame advantage.

14.♗c2 ♕c7

John Emms points out that this position can also arise via the Ruy Lopez, and the game Kosintseva-Zviagintsev, for example, arose in this way. As usual we have changed the move order of many games to make the presentation clearer.

A) **14...♗c7 15.♗e3**:

A1) **15...d5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.♗d4 ♗d5 20.♗xe4**:

A11) **20...c5 21.♗xc5 ♖xe5 22.♗xd5 ♖xd5 23.♗d4 ♕d6 24.♕g4** 24.g3 ♗b6 25.♖e4± . **24...♖g5 25.♕f3 ♕h2+ 26.♔f1 ♕h1+ 27.♔e2 ♕xg2 28.♕xg2 ♖xg2 29.♔f3 ♖h2?** 29...♖g6N 30.♖e7 ♗b6 31.♖d1 ♗xd4 32.♖xd4 ♖f6+ 33.♖f4 ♖xf4+ 34.♔xf4±. **30.♖e7+–** (Wei Yi-Melkumyan, Tsaghkadzor Wch tt 2015);

A12) **20...♗xe4 21.♖xe4 ♕d5** (Bauer-Sanikidze, France tt 2015) 2**2.♕c2!N ♗xe5** 22...c5 23.c4±. **23.♖ae1 f6 24.a3±**

A2) **15…♕e7 16.b3** 16.♕d2N ♖ad8 17.♖ad1±. **16…♕f8** (Sengupta-Shyam, Nagpur 2015) **17.c4N**, with a space advantage, looks a bit better for White.

B) The following game is also a good example of the strength of White's set-up: **14…♕d7 15.♗e3 ♖ad8 16.a4 ♗c7 17.a5 a6 18.♕c1 d5 19.♗xh6! exd4?** 19…gxh6 20.♕xh6 ♕e7 21.dxe5 ♘h7 22.♘f5 ♕f8 23.♕h5 ♘f4 24.♕g4+ ♘g6 25.♘3h4±. **20.e5 ♘e4** (Hou Yifan-Stefanova, Beijing 2013) **21.♗xg7!N ♔xg7 22.♘h5+ ♔f8 23.cxd4** Black is lost, e.g. **23…♗f5 24.♗xe4 dxe4 25.♕h6+ ♔e7 26.♕g5+ ♔f8 27.♘f6 ♕e6 28.g4 ♗xg4 29.♕h6+ ♔e7 30.♘g5+–**

15.♗e3 ♖ad8

15…d5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♗f4 ♘fd7 18.dxe5 ♘xe5 (Kosintseva-Zviagintsev, Moscow 2010) 19.exd5N ♗xd5 20.♘f5 f6 21.♕h5 ♖e6 22.b3 g6 23.♕xh6 gxf5 24.♗xf5 ♕g7 25.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 26.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 27.♗xe5 fxe5 28.♖xe5±.

16.♕c1

The queen takes aim at h6 and rules out any tactics on the d-file by moving out of the rook's line of fire.

16…♗c8

A) **16…♔h7 17.a4**:

A1) **17…a5** (Kosintseva-Zhao Xue, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014) **18.♕d2N**, with the idea of bringing the other rook to d1, is better for White. **18…d5?** doesn't work with the king on h7: **19.exd5 ♘xd5** 19…exd4 20.♗f4! dxc3 21.bxc3 ♕c8 22.d6±. **20.♘xe5±**;

A2) **17…c5?! 18.d5 ♗d7 19.♘d2** 19.♗d3N c4 20.♗e2 ♔g8 21.♘d2 ♗xe3 22.fxe3 a6 23.♗xc4±. **19…c4 20.♕d1 ♗xe3 21.fxe3 a6?! 22.♖f1 ♖c8? 23.♖xf6 gxf6 24.♘h5 ♕d8 25.♕f3±** Zhang Zhong-Morozevich, Berlin Wch blitz 2015

B) 16…♕e7 17.a4 ♘d7 18.a5 ♗c7 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.♘f5 ♕f8 21.b4 a6 22.g3± Prusikin-Gabriel, Switzerland tt 2006.

17.a4

17.♘f5!?N.

17…a5

17…exd4N 18.cxd4 ♗a5 19.♖e2 ♗b4 20.♗d3±.

18.♘f5

18.♗xh6!? gxh6 19.♕xh6 ♕e7 20.♗b3 d5 21.exd5 ♕f8 22.♕g5 ♘h7 23.♕h5 ♘f4 24.♕h4 ♘g6 25.♕h5 ♘f4 26.♕h4 and in Castellanos Rodriguez-Goganov, Leon 2012, Black could have repeated moves with 26…♘g6=.

18…exd4?

This runs into a thunderous blow. 18…♘h5N limits the damage, e.g. 19.♔h1 d5 20.dxe5 dxe4 21.♗xe4 ♗xe3 22.♕xe3 ♘xe5 23.♘xh6+! ♔f8 24.♕g5 ♘f6 25.♘f5 ♗xf5 26.♕xf5 ±.

19.♗xh6!

A typical sacrifice.

19...d5?

19...♗xf5N 20.exf5 dxc3 21.bxc3 ♖xe1+ 22.♘xe1 ♘d5 23.fxg6 gxh6 24.♕xh6 fxg6 25.♕xg6+ ♕g7 26.♕e6+ ♔f8 27.♗g6 ♘f4 28.♕f5+ ♔e7 29.♕xf4 ♕xg6 30.♘f3±.

20.♘xg7?!

20.♗xg7!N is even better, e.g. **20...♘xe4** 20...♗xf5 21.♗xf6+–; 20...dxe4 21.♕h6+–. **21.♖xe4 ♖xe4 22.♗xe4 dxe4 23.♕h6 f6 24.♗xf6 ♗xf5 25.♗xd8 ♕xd8 26.g4! ♕f8 27.♕g5 ♗d8 28.♕xf5 ♕xf5 29.gxf5 dxc3 30.bxc3 ♘f4 31.♘d4+–**

20...d3?

20...♖xe4N 21.cxd4 ♔h8 22.♕g5 ♘h7 23.♕d2 ♘f6 offers more resistance.

21.♘xe8 ♖xe8 22.♗xd3 ♗xh3 23.♗e3 ♗xg2 24.♗xb6 ♕xb6 25.♔xg2 dxe4 26.♕g5 c5 27.♗b5 exf3+ 28.♔g1?

28.♔xf3N+–.

28...♖xe1+?

With 28...♘e4N 29.♕g4 ♖e5 Black can continue to fight.

29.♖xe1 ♔g7 30.♗d3 ♕d6 31.♗xg6 fxg6 32.♕e3 ♕d5 33.♕e7+ ♕f7 34.♕xc5 ♘d5 35.♖e5 ♕d7 36.♕d4

1-0

Rabiega-Baumegger, Austria Bundesliga 2002/03.

White should be slightly better in this whole complex as Black more or less mirrors White's concept and the extra tempo counts for something, as White can often achieve d3-d4 under favourable circumstances. Eventually the space advantage often gives him the possibility of starting a furious attack on the kingside. You should always watch out for the typical blow ♗xh6.

It is quite remarkable that a direct transposition to the Ruy Lopez occurs here, which again shows the similarities between this Slow Italian set-up and the Ruy Lopez with d2-d3:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 0-0 7.h3 ♘e7 8.d4 ♗b6 9.♖e1 ♘g6 10.♘bd2 c6 11.♗a4 ♖e8 12.♗c2 h6 13.♘f1 ♕c7 14.♘g3 ♗e6

6.3 – Black plays ...a7-a6 and ...♗a7

This is the classical main line. However, it is just a little slow and so White is usually slightly quicker in the centre as a rule:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 a6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 9.h3 ♘e7 10.♖e1 ♘g6 11.♘f1

Now Black has many options, but White's slight initiative remains in any case. Several move orders transpose to each other, especially those that include …♗e6/…♖e8 and …c7-c6. White doesn't need to pay too much attention to this, as he can almost play on autopilot.

11...h6

A) **11…♘h5**:

A1) **12.♗g5 ♕e8 13.d4** 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.d4 ♘f6 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.dxe5 fxe5 17.♘g3 ♔h8 (Grosar-Polgar, Bled 1994) is not bad for Black due to the strong dark-squared bishop. **13…♘hf4 14.♘e3 ♗e6 15.♘f5 f6 16.♗xf4 ♘xf4 17.h4** (Saric-Zajogin, Germany Bundesliga 2013/14), and White's position is easier to play;

A2) **12.d4**:

A21) **12…♕e8 13.♘e3 ♘hf4** 13…exd4?N 14.♘d5!±. **14.♘f5 exd4** (14…♘e6?! Areschenko-Deac, Mamaia 2015 15.h4N exd4 16.cxd4 ♘e7 17.h5±) **15.cxd4** 15.♘3xd4 ♕d8 16.♕f3± Efimenko-Shirov, Germany Bundesliga 2005/06. **15…♕d8 16.♕c2 c6 17.g3 ♘e6 18.♗e3±** (Arnold-Becker, ICCF email 2012);

A22) **12…♘hf4**:

analysis diagram

A221) **13.♗xf4!?** is favoured by the engines, e.g.:

A2211) **13…♘xf4?!** Aiming for a sacrifice, which doesn't work. **14.dxe5 ♗xh3 15.gxh3 ♘xh3+ 16.♔g2 ♘xf2** 16…♘f4+N 17.♔g3 ♘h5+ 18.♔h2 ♗xf2 19.♖e2±. **17.♕d2 ♕d7** (Bilguun-Alekseenko, St Petersburg 2015) **18.♘e3!N ♘g4** 18…♘xe4 19.♕c2+–; 18…♗xe3 19.♖xe3 ♘g4 20.♖d3+–. **19.♘f5!+–**;

A2212) 13…exf4 14.♕d3 c5 15.♘1d2 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♗e6 17.♖ac1 ♖c8 (Socko-Khalifman, Moscow 2016) 18.♗xe6N fxe6 19.♖xc8 ♕xc8 20.♘c4 ♕d7 21.e5±.

A222) **13.♘g3** follows our general repertoire concept:

A2221) 13…♗e6 (Sivokho-Sepman, St Petersburg 2000) 14.♘f5N exd4 15.♘3xd4 ♗xb3 16.axb3 ♘e6 17.♗e3±;

A2222) **13…h6 14.♘f5** 14.♗e3 is recommended by Emms, and also good: **14…♕f6 15.♗c2 ♖e8 16.♗e3 ♗e6 17.h4!?** After this nice move Black walks on the razor's edge:

A22221) **17…♗xf5?!N 18.exf5 ♘xh4 19.♘xh4 ♕xh4 20.g3 ♕h3** 20…♕g5 21.♔f1. **21.gxf4 exd4 22.cxd4** with a winning advantage;

A22222) 17…♖ad8 18.d5 ♗xe3 (Slawinski-Gyger, ICCF email 2008) 19.fxe3N ♘xd5 20.g4 ♗xf5 21.g5 ♕e7 22.exf5 ♘xh4 23.♕xd5 c6 24.♕e4 ♘xf3+ 25.♕xf3 ♕xg5+ 26.♕g2±;

A22223) 17…exd4N 18.♘3xd4! ♗xd4 19.cxd4±;

A22224) **17…♔f8? 18.g3 ♘d5 19.♗g5** 19.dxe5!N leads to a clear advantage after 19…♘xe5 20.♗xa7 ♖xa7 21.♘xe5 dxe5 22.♘xg7! ♔xg7 23.exd5 ♖d8 24.♖e3 ♖xd5 25.♕h5± with ideas like ♖ae1, ♗e4 or ♖f3, depending on how Black continues. **19…hxg5 20.hxg5 ♕d8 21.exd5 ♗xd5 22.dxe5 dxe5 23.♗e4±** Delchev-Hernandez, Dresden ol 2008.

A2223) 13…exd4 14.cxd4 ♗e6 and now White has many options:

analysis diagram

A22231) **15.♗e3!?N d5** 15…♕f6?! 16.♗c2±. **16.♘e5 dxe4 17.♘xg6 ♗xb3 18.♕xb3 ♘xg6 19.♘xe4±**;

A22232) **15.d5 ♗xh3 16.♗xf4 ♘xf4 17.gxh3 ♕f6** 17…♘xh3+N 18.♔g2 ♘xf2 19.♕d2±. **18.h4 ♕xb2?!** Black should have tried 18…♘h3+ with a more unclear position. **19.♕c2 ♕f6** (Balogh-Votava, Germany Bundesliga 2015/16) **20.♔h2!N ♖ae8 21.♖g1 ♔h8 22.♖af1 ♗c5 23.♕d2 c6 24.dxc6 bxc6 25.♘g5 h6 26.♘h3 ♘g6 27.h5 ♘h4 28.♗d1±**;

A22233) **15.♗c2!?** is the safest way: **15…♖e8?!** 15…c6N 16.♗xf4 ♘xf4 17.♕d2 ♘g6 18.♖ad1±; 15…♗xh3? 16.gxh3 ♕d7 17.♘f5+–. **16.♗e3 ♗d7?! 17.♕d2±** Kadric-Yang Kaiqi, Philadelphia 2016.

A2224) **13…♗d7 14.♗c2 c5** (Andriasyan-Pashikian, Yerevan ch-ARM 2008) 14…♕c8N 15.♘f5±. **15.dxe5N dxe5 16.♘f5 c4 17.♗xf4 exf4 18.♕e2 ♕b6 19.♖ad1 ♗e6 20.♘5d4 ♕xb2 21.♘xe6 fxe6 22.♕xc4±**;

A2225) **13…♕e7 14.♗e3 ♖d8 15.♗c2 h6?!** 15…c5N 16.♘f5 ♕f6 17.d5±. **16.♘f5 ♕f6 17.g3 ♘e6 18.♘h2±** (Kramnik-Campora, Moscow 1989);

A2226) **13…♕f6?** runs into the strike **14.♘h5!**

analysis diagram

and Black loses at least a pawn, for example: **14…♕e7** 14…♘xh5?N 15.♗g5+– shows one point of the prophylactic move 11…h6. **15.♗xf4 ♘xf4** 15…exf4N 16.♕d2±. **16.♘xf4 exf4 17.♕d2**:

A22261) **17…g5 18.e5 h6 19.exd6 ♕xd6 20.h4 ♗g4** 20…gxh4N 21.♖e4+–. **21.♕d3 ♗xf3 22.♕xf3 c5 23.hxg5 cxd4** (Belikov-Novik, Sochi 1990) **24.♕xb7N dxc3 25.♗xf7++–**;

A22262) After **17…♕f6** one classical game is **18.e5 dxe5 19.♖xe5 c6** 19…♗d7 20.♖ae1 c5 (Tishin-Geller, Samara 2002) 21.♖1e4!N ♗b8 22.♖xf4+– Emms. **20.♖ae1 h6 21.♖1e4 ♗b8 22.♖xf4 ♕g6 23.♖xf7 ♖xf7 24.♖e7 ♕b1+ 25.♘e1 ♗f4 26.♕e2 ♗f5 27.♖xf7 ♔h8 28.g4 ♗d3 29.♕xd3 ♕xe1+ 30.♔g2 1-0** Felgaer-Hector, Copenhagen 2002.

B) **11…♗e6**:

B1) **12.d4!? ♗xb3 13.♕xb3 ♕c8 14.♘g3 ♖e8?** 14…h6N limits the damage. **15.♗g5 ♘d7 16.♘f5 ♘df8**

analysis diagram

17.h4! White's h-pawn marches forward, acting as a battering ram to breach Black's king position. **17…h6 18.h5 hxg5 19.hxg6 ♘xg6 20.♘xg5 ♕d7** (Svidler-Karjakin, Baku 2015) **21.♖e3!N exd4** 21…d5 22.♕d1 dxe4 23.♕g4+–. **22.♖h3 ♖e5 23.♕xb7 ♕c8 24.♕b3 d5 25.♘xf7 ♔xf7 26.cxd4+–**;

B2) After **12.♘g3** Black has several possible options:

B21) **12…♗xb3 13.♕xb3 ♖b8** 13…♕d7N 14.♗g5±. **14.d4 ♖e8 15.♗d2 h6 16.♖ad1 ♕d7** (Jaracz-Klovans, Guben 2003) **17.♕c2!?N ♕e6 18.♗e3 ♗b6 19.a4±**;

B22) **12…♕d7**:

B221) 13.d4 ♗xb3 14.♕xb3 h6 15.♗e3 exd4 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.cxd4 c6 18.a4 a5 19.♘d2 ♖fe8 20.♘c4± (Geller-Faizrakhmanov, Russia tt 2016);

B222) Amazingly, even 13.♗g5!?N works due to 13…♗xh3?! being inadvisable: 14.gxh3

♕xh3 15.d4 h6 16.♗xf6 ♘f4 17.♘h4 gxf6 18.♕f3 ♕xh4 19.♘f5 ♕h3 20.♕xh3 ♘xh3+ 21.♔g2 ♘f4+ 22.♔f3

(see analysis diagram next column)

analysis diagram

And White's attack is stronger than Black's.

B23) 12…h6 13.d4 ♖e8 14.♗e3 transposes to the main line.

C) **11…c6 12.♘g3** (the direct 12.d4!? is the alternative):

C1) 12…♗e6 13.d4 ♕c7 (Wolff-Sokolov, Wijk aan Zee 1993) 14.♗g5N ♔h8 15.♕d2±;

C2) **12…♖e8 13.d4 ♗e6 14.♗e3 ♗xb3** 14…d5N 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗xf6 ♕xf6 17.♘h5 ♕d8 18.exd5 ♗xd5 19.dxe5±. **15.♕xb3 ♕c7** (Larrea-Coppola, Montevideo ch-URU 2009) **16.♗g5N ♘f4 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♘f5 d5 19.♕c2 ♔h8 20.g3 ♘g6 21.♕d2±**;

C3) 12…h6 13.d4 ♕c7 14.♗e3± transposes to 13…c6;

C4) **12…d5 13.♗g5!** White should always watch out for concrete situations in which he can exploit this pin. **13…h6 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.exd5 cxd5** 15…♘h4N 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.♖e4 ♘xf3+ 18.♕xf3 ♕xf3 19.gxf3 ♗xh3 20.♖xe5±. **16.♗xd5 ♖d8 17.♗e4 ♘f4 18.♕c2 g6 19.♘e2 ♘e6 20.d4±** Hou Yifan-Ilincic, Budapest 2008.

D) **11…b5 12.♘g3 ♗b7** And now White can follow either of two different approaches:

analysis diagram

D1) Emms advocates leaving the d-pawn on d3 and gives the following game as main example: **13.a4 ♖e8** One recent example is 13…♗b6 14.♘f5 c5 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗xh6!? gxh6 17.♕d2 ♘h7 18.♕xh6 ♕f6 19.♘h2 ♘f4 20.♘g4 ♕xh6 21.♘gxh6+ ♔h8 (Swiercz-Deac, Gjakova Ech 2016) 22.♘xf7+!?N ♖xf7 23.♗xf7 ♘xd3 24.♖e2±. **14.♘h2 d5 15.♕f3 ♘h4 16.♕e2 ♘g6 17.♘g4 ♘f4 18.♕f3 ♘xg4 19.hxg4 dxe4 20.dxe4 ♕f6 21.♘f5±** Bauer-Nybäck, France tt 2009;

D2) **13.d4**:

D21) **13...♖e8 14.♗c2 d5 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5** 15...♘xe4 16.♘d3 ♕f6 17.♘h5 ♕h4 18.♗e3 ♘d6 (Khairullin-Zhumabaev, Zvenigorod 2008) 19.♘g3!?N a5 20.♘c5 ♗c6 21.a4 ±. **16.dxe5 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 dxe4 18.♕xd8 ♖axd8 19.♗f4 e3 20.♗xe3 ♗xe3 21.♖xe3 ♖d2 22.♖c1±** (Movsesian-Hammer, Tromsø 2013). White can keep the extra pawn, but Black's activity should be enough to defend with very precise play;

D22) **13...c5 14.d5!?** 14.a4 requires investigation too. **14...c4 15.♗c2 ♗c8 16.♘h2 ♔h8 17.a4 ♗d7 18.♗g5 h6 19.♗d2 ♗c5 20.♕f3 ♘h4 21.♕e2 ♕b6 22.a5 ♕a7 23.♘g4 ♗xg4 24.hxg4 ♕d7 25.♗d1!±** with a complex position and slightly better chances for White in Jaracz-Piket, Belgrade 1999;

D23) For the line 13...h6 14.♗c2 ♖e8 15.a4 see 12...b5.

E) 11...♖e8 12.♘g3 ♗e6 13.d4 h6 14.♗e3 transposes to the main line.

12.♘g3

The position is almost symmetrical, but White has a few extra trump cards in our opinion.

12...♖e8

A) **12...♘h7** A typical idea to trade pieces on the kingside, but here it doesn't work at all. **13.d4**:

A1) **13...♘g5?! 14.♘xg5 hxg5 15.♘f5 ♘f4?! 16.g3 g6** 16...♘xh3+N 17.♔g2 g6 18.♖h1 gxf5 19.♖xh3 ♕f6 20.♕h5+–. **17.gxf4 gxf4 18.dxe5 ♕g5+ 19.♔h1 ♗xf5 20.exf5 ♗xf2 21.♖f1 ♗g3 22.exd6 ♕xf5 23.♕g4+–** Wei Yi-l'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2015;

A2) **13...♕e7?! 14.♗e3 ♘g5 15.♘h2** 15.♘xg5!?N is even stronger: 15...hxg5 16.♘f5 ♕f6 (16...♗xf5?! 17.exf5 ♘f4 18.g3+–) 17.♕g4±. **15...♘f4?! 16.h4 ♘h7 17.♘f5 ♗xf5 18.exf5 ♕f6 19.g3+–** (Kindermann-Sebastian, Germany Bundesliga 2006/07), explained in detail by Stefan Kindermann, an expert on the Slow Italian, on his DVD;

A3) **13...♘h4 14.♗e3 ♘xf3+ 15.♕xf3 ♕f6** (Kobalia-Kritz, Port Erin 2005) **16.♕e2!?N exd4 17.cxd4 ♗xd4 18.♘h5 ♕e5 19.♗xd4 ♕xd4 20.♖ad1 ♕e5** 20...♕b4 21.♖d3 ♔h8 22.♖g3 ♘g5 23.h4 ♘e6 24.♗xe6 ♗xe6 25.♘xg7 ♖g8 26.♘xe6 fxe6 27.♖b3±. **21.♖d5 ♕e7 22.e5 ♗e6 23.exd6 cxd6 24.♖d3 ♘f6 25.♘xg7 ♔xg7 26.♖g3+ ♔h8 27.♕e3 ♘h7 28.♗c2 ♕f6 29.♕e4 ♗f5 30.♕xf5 ♕xf5 31.♗xf5±**;

A4) **13...♕f6 14.♗e3 ♘g5 15.♘h2!** A strong move by one of the biggest experts in this opening. White doesn't allow simplifications. **15...♘f4** 15...♖e8N 16.♘g4±. **16.h4 ♘h7** (Nevednichy-Cozianu, Romania tt 1998) **17.♘f5!?N ♗xf5 18.exf5 ♕xf5 19.♗c2 ♕h5 20.dxe5 ♕xd1 21.♖axd1 ♗xe3 22.fxe3 ♘g6 23.exd6 cxd6 24.♗xg6 fxg6 25.♖xd6±**

B) **12...b5 13.d4** Again it is of course possible to play with the pawn on d3. One high-level correspondence game went 13.a4 c5 14.♗e3 ♕c7 15.axb5 axb5 16.c4 b4 17.♘f5 ♔h8 18.♘3h4± (Nickel-Moll, ICCF email 2013) and White had some pressure, but Black managed to defend. Over the board this is very unpleasant. **13...♗b7 14.♗c2 ♖e8 15.a4**

analysis diagram

15…exd4 15…♗b6 (Brkic-Kamsky, Kallithea tt 2008) 16.a5N ♗a7 17.♗d2 c5 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.c4! b4 20.♗e3 ♕xd1 21.♖axd1 ♖ed8 22.♘d2 ♘d7 23.♘b3 ♘f4 24.♘f5 ♘e6 25.♘c1 ♘d4 26.♗a4 f6 27.♘d6 ♖ab8 28.♘xb7 ♖xb7 29.♘d3 ♖c8 30.♗xd4 cxd4 31.♗xd7 ♖xd7 32.b3±. **16.cxd4 c5 17.d5 c4** 17…♗c8 18.axb5 axb5 19.b3 ♗d7 20.♗b2 c4 21.bxc4 bxc4 (Oratovsky-Bachmann, Barcelona 2016) 22.♗a4!?N ♘e5 23.♘xe5 dxe5 24.♗xd7 ♘xd7 25.♕e2 ♕b6 26.♘f5 ♘c5 27.♗c1±.

analysis diagram

18.b4 18.♗e3!? ♗b6 (18…♗xe3 19.♖xe3 b4 20.a5±) 19.axb5 ♗xe3 20.♖xe3 axb5 21.♖xa8 ♕xa8 (Dojcinovic-Glaser, ICCF email 2011) 22.♘f5!?N ♕d8 23.♘3d4±. **18…♘d7 19.♗b2 ♘de5 20.axb5 axb5 21.♘f5 ♕f6** (Landa-Kazhgaleyev, Russia tt 2007) **22.♘xe5N dxe5 23.♖a5 ♗b6 24.♖xb5 ♖a2 25.♕b1 ♖aa8 26.♕c1±**;

C) 12…♗e6 usually transposes after 13.d4 ♖e8.

13.d4 ♗e6

A) **13…♗d7 14.♗c2** Even 14.♗e3!? is playable as 14…exd4 (Ma Qun-Daulyte, Auckland blitz 2016) 15.cxd4N ♘xe4? runs into 16.♕c2 ♘xg3 17.♕xg6 ♘f5 18.♗xf7++–. **14…♗c6** 14…c5 15.♗e3 cxd4 16.cxd4 b5 17.♕d2 a5?! 18.♖ad1 ♕c7 19.♖c1 ♕b7?! 20.♗xh6 1-0 Martin Clemente-Andresen, corr 2000. **15.♗e3 exd4** 15…b5 16.♕d2 exd4 17.♗xd4 ♘e5 (Kindermann-Timman, Potsdam Express rapid 2012) 18.♕e3N ♕b8 19.♘f5±. **16.♗xd4 ♗d7** (Korneev-Lopez Martinez, Portugal tt 2006) **17.♕d2N ♘e5 18.♘xe5 dxe5 19.♗xa7 ♖xa7 20.♖ad1±** White controls the d-file and has the better piece placement;

B) **13…b5 14.a4 ♗b7 15.♗c2** transposes to 12…b5. **15.axb5** is also interesting: **15…axb5 16.♕d3**:

analysis diagram

B1) **16…♕d7?**

analysis diagram

17.♗e3?! 17.♗xh6!N gxh6 18.♕e3 ♔h7 19.♖xa7 ♖xa7 20.dxe5±. **17…exd4 18.♖xa7? ♖xa7 19.♗xd4 ♖a6?** 19…♘e5!N refutes White's approach. **20.♗xf6 gxf6 21.♕d2 ♗xe4 22.♘xe4 ♔g7 23.♘c5 1-0** Dourerassou-Bachmann, Barcelona 2015;

B2) **16…♗b6N 17.♖xa8 ♕xa8 18.♕xb5 ♗c6** 18…exd4?! 19.♗xh6 gxh6?! 20.♕f5±. **19.♕c4 d5! 20.♕e2 exd4 21.♘xd4 ♗a4 22.♗xa4 ♕xa4 23.♕c2 ♕a8** with counterplay for Black.

C) **13…c6 14.♗e3 ♕c7 15.♕d2**:

C1) **15…♗e6?**

analysis diagram

16.♗xh6 ♗xb3 16...gxh6N 17.♕xh6 exd4 18.♘f5 ♗xf5 19.exf5+– **17.♗xg7! ♘h7 18.♕h6 ♖e6** (Onischuk-Baryshpolets, Lutsk 2015) **19.♘g5!N ♘gf8 20.♘xe6 ♗xe6 21.♘h5 f5 22.dxe5 dxe5 23.exf5 ♗xf5 24.♖xe5 ♗g6 25.♖ae1+–**;

C2) 15...d5? 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 (Boguslavsky-Zwanzger, Baden-Baden 2015) 17.♗f4!N ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.♗xe5 ♕d8 20.♖xe4±;

C3) **15...exd4**:

analysis diagram

C31) 16.cxd4N is met by 16...♘xe4 17.♘xe4 ♖xe4 18.♗xh6 ♗f5=;

C32) **16.♗xd4 ♘e5** 16...♗xd4N 17.♘xd4 c5 18.♘df5 ♗xf5 19.♘xf5 ♘xe4 20.♕c2 ♘g5 21.♘xh6+ ♔h7 22.♕f5 gxh6 23.h4 ♕c8 24.♕xc8 ♖axc8 25.hxg5 ♖xe1+ 26.♖xe1 c4 27.♗c2 hxg5 28.♖e7 ♔g7 29.♖xb7±. **17.♘h4±** Poluljahov-Averkin, Novorossijsk 1996;

C33) The computer even gives **16.♗xh6!?N**, with the following sample lines: **16...d5 17.e5 ♘e4 18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.♖xe4 dxc3** 19...♗f5 20.♖xd4 ♘xe5 (20...♗xd4 21.cxd4 gxh6 22.♕xh6 ♘f8 23.♖e1 ♖e6 24.♕g5+ ♗g6 25.h4 ♕e7 26.♕g4±) 21.♕g5 ♘xf3+ 22.gxf3 ♕e5 23.♖f4 g6 24.♕h4±. **20.bxc3 ♗f5 21.e6 fxe6 22.♗f4 ♕f7 23.♘g5 ♕f6 24.♖ae1 ♘xf4 25.♕xf4 ♗xe4 26.♖xe4 ♕xf4 27.♖xf4 ♗b8 28.♖e4 ♗d6 29.♘xe6±** Here more analysis and practical tests are needed.

14.♗e3!?

14.♗c2 is played most often, but we don't like the answer 14...c5!?, which scores well for Black.

Note that the immediate 14.♘f5? from Bhat-Haslinger, Dos Hermanas 2004, is a mistake due to the typical counterblow 14...exd4N 15.cxd4 d5! (Emms). So this thematic knight jump should first be prepared well.

14...♕c8

A) Now **14…c5N** can be met by **15.♗xe6 fxe6** 15…♖xe6 16.d5 ♖e7 17.♘d2±. **16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♕xd8 ♖exd8 18.a4 ♖ac8 19.♖ed1 ♖xd1+ 20.♖xd1 ♔f7 21.♘f1 ♗b8 22.♘1d2 ♔e7 23.g3±** with a better endgame for White due to having a better pawn structure;

B) **14…♗xb3 15.♕xb3 ♕d7** 15…exd4 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.cxd4 b5 18.♖ac1 ♘d7?! 19.♘f5 ♘e7 20.♘3h4 ♘xf5 21.♘xf5 ♖e6 22.♕c3 ♖c8 (W.Hendriks-Henris, Belgium tt 2000/01) 23.d5N ♖f6 24.f4 ♘b6 25.g4 ♖g6 26.b3±. **16.♖ad1 ♕c6** (Margolin-Zaitsev, Germany Bundesliga B 2008/09) 16…exd4 (Heinrich-Dietrich, Remote email 2013) 17.♗xd4N ♗xd4 18.cxd4 c6 19.e5 dxe5 20.dxe5 ♘d5 21.♕c2 ♖e6 22.♘f5±. **17.♕c2 a5** 17…exd4N 18.♘xd4 ♕d7 19.a4 b5 20.a5 ♖ad8 21.c4 bxc4 22.♕xc4±. **18.a4 exd4 19.♘xd4 ♕d7** (Mergard-Vecek, ICCF email 2010) **20.f3!?N d5 21.♘df5±**;

C) **14…exd4 15.♗xd4** 15.♘xd4!?N ♗xb3 16.♕xb3 ♗b6 (16…♘xe4? 17.♘xe4 ♖xe4 18.♕xb7±) 17.♘df5 ♗xe3 18.♖xe3±; 15.cxd4!?N. **15…♗xd4 16.cxd4 ♘f4?! 17.♕d2 ♘6h5?!** (Saric-Fodor, Kutina tt jr 2007) **18.d5N ♗c8 19.e5 a5 20.♘xh5 ♘xh5 21.g4 dxe5 22.gxh5±**;

D) **14…c6 15.♗c2 ♕c7** 15…♘h7 16.♘f5 ♕c7 17.♕d2 f6 18.h4± Lagarde-Demuth, Rochefort 2014. **16.♕d2 ♖ad8?!** After 16…♔h7!? we suggest 17.♖ad1 ♖ad8 18.♕c1 b5 and only now 19.♘f5 ♘g8 (Dominguez Perez-Buhmann, Dresden ol 2008) 20.b4!?N (20.a4!?N c5 21.d5 ♗d7 22.♕d2±) 20…♗xa2 (20…exd4 21.♘3xd4 ♗c4 22.a4±) 21.h4 f6 22.♕b2 ♗e6 23.♖a1±. **17.♘f5**

analysis diagram

Finally the knight jump is called for and poses Black problems:

D1) 17…exd4? is a mistake that can be punished in spectacular fashion: 18.♗xh6!! dxc3 19.bxc3 ♗xf5 20.exf5 gxh6 21.♕xh6 d5 22.fxg6 fxg6 23.♗xg6+– Bartsch-Pott, LSS email 2013;

D2) 17…d5?! leads to a significantly better position for White after 18.♘xg7 ♔xg7 19.♗xh6+ ♔g8 20.exd5 ♗xd5 21.♘xe5± (Areschenko-Sutovsky, Gibraltar 2007);

D3) **17…♗xf5 18.exf5 ♘f8?** 18…exd4? 19.♗xh6+– (Kapnisis-Mastrovasilis, Vrahati ch-GRE 2010); 18…e4 19.fxg6 exf3 (Erdogdu-Abdullayev, Izmir 2015) limits the damage somewhat, but despite this the position is still much better for White. **19.♗xh6 gxh6 20.♕xh6 ♘8h7** 20…♕e7N 21.♖e3+–. **21.♘g5 exd4 22.♘xh7 ♘xh7 23.f6 ♘xf6 24.♕g5+ ♔f8 25.♕xf6 ♔g8 26.♕g5+ 1-0** Lamoureux-Forgues, France tt 2008.

15.♗c2 c5

A) 15…♗d7?! 16.♕d2 ♔h7 17.♖ad1 ♗c6 18.c4 exd4 runs into the typical hammer blow:

analysis diagram

19.♗xh6!! gxh6 20.♘f5 ♘g8 21.♘g5+ ♔h8 22.♘xf7+ ♔h7 and now in Vorobiov-Cvek, Pardubice 2002, 23.♘7xh6N would have been even stronger than the game continuation 23.e5, e.g. 23…♖e6 24.e5 dxe5 25.♘f7 ♕d7 26.♘g5+ ♔h8 27.♘xe6 ♕xe6 28.♕g5 ♕f7 29.♘h4 ♘f8 30.c5+–;

B) In Roganovic-Varga, Hungary tt 2010/11, Black played the prophylactic move **15…♔h7**. White can continue as in the main line with **16.♕d2N** (16.♘f5!? should also work) **16…c5** and now **17.♖ad1!?**⩲ with better control of the centre. **17…♗xa2?** doesn't work because of **18.♘f5** and the attack is decisive.

16.♕d2

16.♘f5!?N is a very interesting alternative to stop the sacrifices on h3, e.g. **16…♗xf5** 16…♕c7 17.♕d2⩲; 16…cxd4 17.cxd4 ♗xf5 18.exf5 exd4 19.♗xh6 ♘e5 20.♘xe5 dxe5 21.♗g5 ♕c6 22.♖c1 ♕b6 23.♗xf6 ♕xf6 24.♕f3⩲; 16…d5? 17.♘d6+–. **17.exf5 ♘f8** 17…cxd4 18.♗xd4! ♘h4 19.♗xa7 ♘xf3+ 20.gxf3 ♖xa7 21.♕xd6⩲. **18.dxe5 dxe5 19.♘h2⩲**

16…cxd4

16…b5?! 17.♘f5 ♗xf5 18.exf5 ♘e7? 18…cxd4N 19.cxd4 ♘f4 20.♖ac1 ♕b7 21.♗xf4 exf4 22.♕xf4⩲, **19.♗xh6! ♘xf5** 19…gxh6N 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.♕xh6 ♘ed5 22.♗e4 ♘xe4 23.♖xe4+–. **20.♗g5** 20.dxe5!? dxe5 21.♗g5+– (Mergard-Röckendorf, Email 2012) is a more precise move order. **20…♘h7?! 21.dxe5 dxe5 22.♘xe5 ♘xg5 23.♕xg5 ♘h6 24.♗e4 ♖b8 25.♗d5 ♖b6?! 26.♘xf7! ♘xf7 27.♖e7 ♖xe7 28.♕xe7 ♕f5 29.♕xa7 ♔h7 30.♕a8 1-0** Macieja-Stefanova, Drammen 2004.

17.cxd4 exd4

17…♗xh3N 18.gxh3 ♕xh3 19.♕d3 exd4 20.♗d2 ♘g4 21.♕f1 ♘xf2 22.♔xf2 d3+ 23.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 24.♖xe3 ♕xf1+ 25.♖xf1 dxc2 26.♖c1⩲.

18.♘xd4

18.♗xd4!?N ♗xd4 19.♘xd4 ♗xh3 20.gxh3 ♕xh3 21.♘df5 ♘e5 22.♗d1±.

18...♗xh3 19.gxh3 ♕xh3 20.♘df5 ♘e5 21.♕e2?!

21.♗d1!N ♘c4 22.♕d3 ♘xe3 23.♘xe3 d5 24.exd5±.

21...♘fg4 22.♗xa7 ♕h2+ 23.♔f1 ♕h3+ 24.♔g1 ♕h2+

½-½

S. Hansen-Petrosian, Kemer 2007.

Conclusion

This line with the knight transfer to g6 has been played a lot in the past. 11…♘h5 and 11…b5 are of independent significance. After 11…♘h5 12.d4 Black has problems justifying his approach, as White controls the centre and is subsequently able to push back the black pieces. After 11…b5 maybe it's better to leave the d-pawn on d3 and attack on the kingside, as John Emms recommends. Note that moves like …♖e8/…♗e6/…c7-c6 often transpose to the same positions. In general White often achieves d3-d4 or ♘f5 with good play and fantastic attacking chances. For Black it is much more difficult to mirror this plan. Both sides must watch out for sacrifices on h6 and h3.

Chapter 7
Black plays …♘h5

As a knight on f4 is very annoying for White, this plan, often followed by …♕f6 is very natural. One important question is whether or not Black wants to include …h7-h6.

7.1 – Without …h7-h6

This is very quick, so White should also be quick enough to meet …♘f4 with ♘d5. Black almost has equality in this line, but the enterprising alternative 15.♗g5!? looks very dangerous and might be the reason why 9…h6 is played more often, to prepare the plan with …♘h5-f4 and …♕f6 – see Chapter 7.2. The move 10.♘c4! is very important and should be remembered, as otherwise Black equalises completely.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2

Our recommended move order. Emms points out that after 7.♗b3 a6 8.h3 ♗a7 9.♖e1 the move 9…♘h5?! can be met strongly by 10.♗g5!.

7...a6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 9.h3 ♘h5

10.♘c4!

An important point, as **10.♖e1?! ♕f6 11.♘f1** (11.d4?! exd4 12.e5 ♘xe5 13.♘xd4?! (13.cxd4!?N ♘xf3+ 14.♘xf3 ♘f4 15.♖e4 limits the damage, but White does not have enough compensation) 13…♘f4 14.♘e4 ♕h4∓ backfired in Nisipeanu-Haast, Wijk aan Zee 2016) **11…♕g6 12.♘h4 ♕f6 13.♘f3** equalises.

10...♕f6

10…♘f4 11.♗xf4 exf4 12.d4. Here White has a strong centre and the pawn on f4 is weak, rather than being a threat. **12…♘e7** 12…b5 13.♘cd2 ♖b8 14.♖e1 b4 (14…♘e7 (Asgarizadeh-Girish, Al-Ain jr 2013) 15.e5!?N d5 16.♗c2 ♘g6 17.b4±; 14…a5N 15.a4 b4 16.♕e2±) 15.♕c2 ♘e7 16.cxb4 ♖xb4 17.♘c4 c5 18.♕c3 a5 19.d5 a4 20.♗c2 ♗a6 21.♘fd2 ♘g6 22.a3 ♖b8 23.♗xa4± Hobert-Koronowski, GER email 2011. **13.e5 d5** 13…♘g6N 14.♖e1 d5 15.♘cd2 c5 16.dxc5 ♗xc5 17.♗c2 ♕b6 18.♖e2 ♕xb2 19.♘b3 ♕a3 20.♕xd5 ♗e7 21.♘fd4±. **14.♘cd2 ♘g6 15.♗c2 ♗e6 16.♘b3 ♘h4 17.♘c1 c6 18.♘d3 ♗f5 19.♘de1 ♗e4 20.♘xh4 ♕xh4 21.♘f3 ♗xc2 22.♕xc2 ♕h5 23.a4 ♖ae8 24.♖fe1 ♖e6 25.b4 ♕g6 26.♕d2±** Sciallero-Gagliardi, ICCF email 2009.

11.♘e3 ♘f4

11…♗xe3 12.♗xe3 ♘f4 13.♔h2 ♗e6 14.d4± Ferreira-Cerqueira Filho, Brazil email 2004.

12.♘d5!

It's very important to get rid of the strong knight on f4.

12...♘xd5 13.exd5

13.♗xd5 led to equality in Landa-Kasimdzhanov, Germany Bundesliga 2005/06, after 13...h6 14.♗e3 ♘e7 15.♗b3 ♘g6 16.d4 ♘f4 17.♖e1 ♖e8 18.♔h2 exd4 19.♘xd4 ♘g6 and there is not much scope to improve on the game.

13...♘b8

13...♘d8 14.d4 ♕g6 (Narayanan-Predke, Maribor 2012) 14...e4 15.♘h2 ♕g6 16.♔h1 f5 17.f3 ♘f7 (Friedel-Petermann, Germany Bundesliga 2011/12) 18.fxe4N fxe4 19.♗a4!? b5 20.♗b3 ♗d7 21.♕e2 ♖ae8 22.♗e3± is better for White, especially because the bishop on a7 is out of play. **15.dxe5!N** A strong novelty that leads to a better position for White: **15...♗xh3 16.♘h4 ♕g3 17.♕f3 ♕xh4 18.gxh3 dxe5 19.♖e1 f5** 19...♖e8 20.♖e4 ♕e7 21.♗f4 ♕d6 22.♕h5±. **20.♖xe5 ♔h8 21.♗d2±**

14.d4 exd4

14...h6 (Andriasyan-Amin, Martuni 2008) 15.dxe5!N dxe5 16.♖e1 ♘d7 17.♗e3 ♗xe3 18.♖xe3 b5 19.♕e2 ♖e8 20.♖e1±.

15.♘xd4!?N

An enterprising alternative is **15.♗g5!? ♕g6 16.♗e7**.

analysis diagram

The computer can probably defend this, but over the board it looks very scary. Black's queenside is undeveloped and White can bring all his pieces into the attack, e.g.: **16...♖e8N** 16...dxc3 17.♗c2 ♗f5 18.♗xf5 ♕xf5 19.♗xf8 cxb2 (Ankit-Iuldachev, Nagpur 2012) 20.♗xg7N bxa1♕ 21.♗xa1 ♘d7 22.♖e1 with some compensation for the pawn, as White can attack on the dark squares. **17.♘h4 ♕h6 18.♖e1 ♗d7 19.♕f3** White can also repeat moves with 19.♘f5 ♕g6 20.♘h4=. **19...dxc3** 19...g6 20.♗f6 dxc3 21.g3±. **20.bxc3 g6 21.♕f6 ♕g7 22.♕f4**

analysis diagram

And White has compensation in all cases, but matters are not clear of course.

15...♗xd4

A) 15...♖e8 16.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 17.♕xe1 ♘d7 18.♕e8+ ♘f8 19.♗e3 ♗xd4 20.♗xd4 ♕g6 21.♕e3±;

B) **15...♘d7 16.♗e3 ♖e8** 16...♘e5 17.♕d2 h6 18.f4 ♘g6 19.f5 ♘e5 20.♖f4 with a dangerous initiative on the kingside. One idea is to play ♗f2-h4. **17.♕d2 h6 18.♖ae1 ♘e5 19.f4 ♘g6 20.f5 ♘e5 21.♔h2 b5 22.♖f4** with a complex position that favours White.

16.cxd4

The open c-file and the bishop pair more than compensate for the doubled pawns.

16.♕xd4 ♕g6 (16...♕xd4 17.cxd4 ♗f5 18.♖e1 ♘d7 19.♗d2 ♘f6 20.♖ac1 ♖ac8 21.♖e7 ♗d7 22.♗g5 ♖fd8 23.♖e3 h6 24.♗xf6 gxf6 25.♔h2±) 17.♔h2 ♗f5 18.♖e1 ♘d7 19.♗f4 ♖fe8 20.♖e3 ♖xe3 21.♕xe3 f6 22.♖e1±.

16...♗f5 17.♕f3

17.♗e3 ♘d7 18.♖c1 ♖ac8 19.♖e1 ♖fe8 (19...♘b6 20.a4±) 20.♗d2 ♖xe1+ (20...♕xd4 21.♖xc7±) 21.♗xe1 h6 (21...♘b6 22.♗a5±) 22.♖c3±.

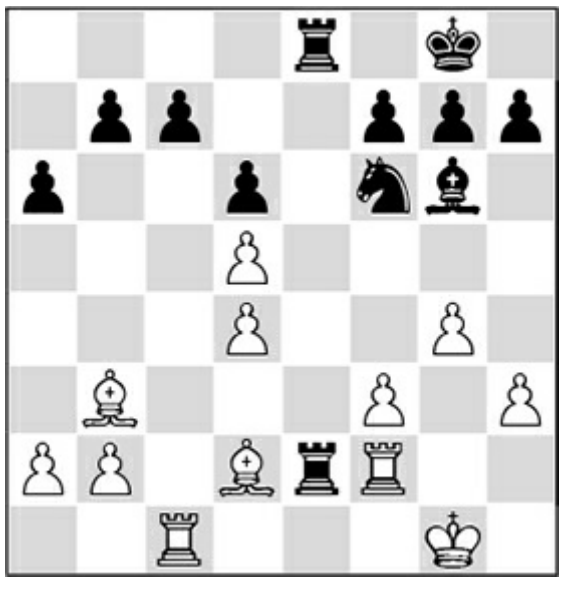
17...♘d7 18.g4

Or 18.♗d2 ♕g6 19.♖ac1 ♖ac8 20.♖fe1 and White is slightly better.

18...♗g6 19.♕xf6 ♘xf6 20.f3

20.♗g5!?.

20...♖fe8 21.♗d2 ♖e2 22.♖f2 ♖ae8 23.♖c1±



Black's minor pieces have problems finding a role in this position. White can slowly play on both wings by advancing the pawns – for example the rook's pawns.

In this line, 10.♘c4! and then 12.♘d5! are very important, as otherwise it is just completely equal. On the 15th move of the main line White has to take a difficult decision. The computer can defend against 15.♗g5!?, but over the board Black's task is very unpleasant. The resulting endgame in the main line might be holdable as well, but White's bishops should make it possible to press on for a very long time.

7.2 – With ...h7-h6

This rules out tricks with ♗g5 and allows Black to follow up with ...♕f6 easily. But it is relatively slow and so White is now usually quick enough to achieve ♗e3 followed by d3-d4.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 a6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 9.h3 h6 10.♖e1 ♘h5 11.♘f1 ♕f6

11...♗e6 can be met by White in two ways:

A) The natural **12.d4 ♗xb3** (12…exd4N 13.♘xd4 ♕h4 14.♗e3±) **13.axb3 ♖e8 14.d5 ♘b8 15.♗e3 ♘d7 16.♗xa7 ♖xa7 17.b4 ♘f4 18.♔h2** (the typical preparation before pushing back the knight with g2-g3) **18…g6 19.g3 ♘h5 20.♘e3±** Korneev-Bolourchifard, Hamedan 2015;

B) And the original 12.♗d5 ♕f6 13.d4 ♗b6 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♗e3 ♘f4 16.♘g3± Gysi-Laurenc, ICCF email 2004.

12.♗e3

12...♘f4

Other moves in this position are played only rarely:

A) After **12…♗xe3** we suggest, in this exceptional case, recapturing with the pawn, which also scores better than the more commonly played knight recapture: **13.fxe3**

analysis diagram

A1) 13…♕e7 14.d4 ♘f6 15.♗c2 ♘a5 16.♘g3 and White can play on both wings, e.g. 16…♗d7 17.b4 ♘c4 18.♗b3 ♘b6 19.c4 ♘c8 20.c5 g6 21.♖c1 ♘a7 22.cxd6 cxd6 23.♖c7 ♖ab8 24.dxe5 dxe5 25.♖f1 ♘b5 26.♖c5 ♗e6 27.♘xe5± Achilles-Richter, ICCF corr 2010;

A2) **13…♕g6 14.♘h4 ♕g5 15.♘f3 ♕g6 16.♔h2 ♔h8 17.g4 ♘f6 18.♘g3 h5?!** 18…♘d8 19.♘f5 ♘e6 20.♖g1 also looks nice for White. **19.g5 ♘h7 20.♖g1 ♘e7 21.♕e2±** Geller-Leniart, Lviv 2008.

B) **12…♗e6 13.d4**

analysis diagram

B1) **13…♘e7? 14.♗xe6 fxe6** 14…♕xe6N 15.♘xe5±. **15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♗xa7 ♖xa7 17.♘1h2±** Nevednichy-Marin, Bucharest 1993;

B2) **13…♗xb3 14.axb3 ♖fe8** (Kaufmann-Nuri, Switzerland tt 2010) 14…exd4N 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.cxd4 ♕g6 17.g4 ♖fe8 18.f3 ♘f6 19.♘g3±; 14…♘f4 15.♘g3 ♘e7? (15…g6N 16.♗xf4 exf4 17.♘f1±) 16.♗xf4 exf4 17.♘h5+– Anikin-Pihlajamaeki, ICCF email 2014. **15.d5N ♘b8 16.♗xa7 ♖xa7 17.♘e3 ♘d7 18.b4±** White has a space advantage and can play on both wings;

B3) 13…exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘f4 15.♕d2 ♗xb3 16.axb3 ♘xd4 17.cxd4 ♘g6 18.♘g3 ♘e7 19.♕c3 c6 20.♘h5 ♕e6 21.♕b4 ♖fb8 22.g4± Krüger-Vertongen, LSS email 2010.

C) 12…♘e7 13.d4 ♘f4 transposes.

13.d4

White's bishop on e3 operates in two directions, White's centre is better, and Black's bishop on a7 and knight on c6 are less effective than White's pieces.

13.♘g3!? is the alternative, which is favoured by Emms and played more often, and is also slightly better for White. One difference is that then 13…g5 should be met by 14.♘h2 ♕g6 15.d4± (Svetushkin-Pilgaard, Ubeda 1999), while in the main line White can exchange on e5 directly and open the centre more quickly against Black's wing attack. But this is a matter of taste of course.

13…♘e7

A) **13…♘a5** (Saric-Rogic, Kutina ch-CRO 2006) **14.♗xf4!?N ♕xf4** 14…exf4 15.♗c2 ♕g6 16.e5 ♗f5 17.♗xf5 ♕xf5 18.♘1d2 d5 19.♘h4 ♕e6 20.♕c2±; 14…♘xb3? 15.dxe5 ♕xf4 16.g3+–. **15.♘e3 ♕f6 16.♗c2 ♘c6 17.♘d5 ♕d8 18.♕d3 ♗e6 19.♖ad1 ♖e8 20.b4 b5 21.a4±**;

B) **13…♗d7 14.♘g3 g6 15.♗xf4! ♕xf4** 15…exf4 16.e5! dxe5 17.♘e4 ♕e7 18.dxe5±.

16.♘f5! This is a typical motif in this kind of position with the queen on f6 and a knight on f4. The queen is trapped. **16...♗xf5 17.g3 ♕xe4 18.♖xe4 ♗xe4 19.♕e2 ♗xf3 20.♕xf3 exd4? 21.♕f6 ♔h7 22.♖e1**, with a winning position in Todorovic-Pavlovic, Belgrade 2009;

C) **13...g5 14.dxe5 dxe5** 14...♘xe5 15.♘xe5 dxe5 16.♗xa7 ♖xa7 17.♘e3 c6 18.♕c2 h5 19.♖ad1±. **15.♘3h2**

analysis diagram

White is slightly quicker now, e.g.: **15...♖d8 16.♕f3 ♘a5** 16...h5N 17.♖ad1 ♗e6 18.♗xe6 fxe6 19.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20.♖d1±. **17.♘g4 ♕g7 18.♖ad1 ♖e8 19.♗xa7 ♘xb3 20.axb3 ♖xa7 21.♘ge3 ♕f6 22.♔h2 h5** (Korneev-La Bella, Cento 2011) **23.♖d2N g4 24.hxg4 hxg4 25.♕d1 ♖a8 26.♘g3±**;

D) **13...♖e8 14.♘g3** and now:

analysis diagram

D1) **14...g6?!** runs into the tricky **15.♗xf4! exf4** 15...♕xf4 16.♘f5!! ♗xf5 17.g3 ♕xe4 18.♖xe4 ♗xe4 19.♘d2 ♗f5? (19...d5N 20.♘xe4 dxe4 21.d5 ♘a5 22.♕e2±) 20.g4 ♗d7 21.♕f3 ♘d8 22.♘e4 ♖e7 23.♕f6 ♖e6 24.♗xe6 ♘xe6 25.♕e7 1-0 Haslinger-Hamblok, Dieren 2015. **16.e5! dxe5 17.♘e4 ♕e7 18.dxe5 ♖d8 19.♘f6+ ♔g7 20.♕c1 ♘xe5 21.♘h5+ gxh5 22.♖xe5 ♕f6 23.♖e4 ♕d6 24.♘h4 f3 25.♖f4 ♗e6 26.♖xf3 ♕d2 27.♕b1 ♖e8 28.♗xe6 ♖xe6 29.♕f5±** Wosch-Lubas, LSS email 2013;

D2) After **14...g5** (Pourramezanali-Kovalev, Al-Ain 2013) we suggest playing **15.♗d5N** (an alternative approach is 15.♗c2N ♔h8 16.d5 ♘e7 17.♘h2, to manoeuvre with a closed centre. But Black's kingside play should not be underestimated) to exchange on e5 later and exploit the hole on f5 in the long run. Here more analysis and practical tests are needed, e.g.: **15...♘e7** 15...♔h8 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♘h2 ♕g6 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.♗xa7 ♖xa7 20.♘g4±. **16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♘h2 ♘exd5** 17...♗xe3 18.fxe3 ♘fxd5 19.exd5 ♕g6 20.e4±.

18.exd5 ♖**d8** 18...♕g7 19.c4 f6 20.♕c2±. **19.**♗**xf4 gxf4** 19...exf4 20.♘h5 ♕b6 (20...♕g6 21.♖c1 (21.♘g4 ♗xg4 22.hxg4 c6 23.c4 b5 24.b3 also looks better for White) 21...c6 22.c4 b5 23.cxb5 axb5 24.♖xc6 ♕xc6 25.dxc6 ♖xd1 26.♖xd1±. In this position, a pawn down, Black is obviously fighting for a draw) 21.♕e2 with strong play against Black's king, e.g. 21...♕g6 22.♖ad1 f5 23.♕e7 ♖f8 24.d6±, **20.**♘**h5** ♕**g5 21.**♘**g4** ♗**xg4 22.**♕**xg4** ♔**h7 23.**♖**ad1** with pressure on the light squares.

14.♘**g3**

14.♘1h2 is also a very interesting way to play – see the game Areschenko-Johannessen, Germany Bundesliga 2006/07, which we analyse later in the Strategy chapter.

14...♘**eg6 15.**♗**c2** ♘**h4**

A) **15...c6?! 16.**♘**f5** ♖**e8**

analysis diagram

17.♘**h2** White can also play the immediate 17.dxe5!?N dxe5 18.♗xa7 ♖xa7 19.♕d6, with an interesting position. **17...h5 18.**♘**f3!N** (Emms) 18.♔h1? is a mistake, as now Black has 18...d5! 19.dxe5 ♕g5? (Black would have equalised after 19...♖xe5N 20.♗d4) 20.♘g3 h4 21.♘f3 ♕h6 22.♘f5 ♕g5 23.♘xg5 1-0 Hou Yifan-Spoelman, Wijk aan Zee 2007. This direct retreat is indeed stronger, e.g.: **18...c5 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.**♕**d6**:

analysis diagram

A1) **20...**♘**e6 21.**♕**d3** ♘**gf4 22.**♕**f1 g6** 22...♗d7 23.g3 g6 24.♖ad1 ♗b5 25.c4 ♗c6 26.♘5h4 g5 27.♘f5 g4 28.hxg4 hxg4 29.gxf4 gxf3 30.♕h3 ♕g6+ 31.♔h2+–. **23.**♘**d6** ♖**d8 24.**♘**xc8** ♖**axc8 25.h4 g5 26.hxg5** ♘**xg5 27.**♘**xg5** ♕**xg5 28.**♖**ad1 h4 29.**♖**d5** ♔**h8 30.**♗**xf4** ♕**xf4 31.c4** ♖**g8 32.**♖**e3**±;

A2) **20...**♗**e6 21.**♖**ad1 c4** 21...♖ac8 22.♗xf4 ♘xf4 23.♕xe5 ♕xe5 24.♘xe5 ♗b8 25.♘d7 ♗a7 26.a4 ♖cd8 27.♘d6 ♖e7 28.♘e5 ♗b8 29.♘ec4±. **22.**♗**xa7** ♖**xa7 23.**♕**b6**

♖aa8 24.♖d6 ♘e7 25.♕xb7 ♖ab8 26.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 27.♕xe7 ♖xe7 28.♘g5 ♔f8 29.♘xe6+ ♖xe6 30.♖xe6 ♘xe6 31.♖b1 ♖d8 32.♖d1 ♖b8 33.b3 cxb3 34.♗xb3±

B) **15…♗e6 16.♘f5 ♖fe8**:

analysis diagram

B1) **17.h4!?** This is the same position we looked at in Chapter 6.3 after 11..♘h5 12.d4 etc. There we mention some more lines. **17…♖ad8** 17…♔f8? 18.g3 ♘d5 (Delchev-Hernandez, Dresden ol 2008) 19.dxe5!N ♘xe5 20.♗xa7 ♖xa7 21.♘xe5 dxe5 22.♘xg7 ♔xg7 23.exd5 ♖d8 24.♖e3 ♖xd5 25.♕h5±. **18.d5 ♗xe3** (Slawinski-Gyger, ICCF email 2008) **19.fxe3N ♘xd5 20.g4 ♗xf5 21.g5 ♕e7 22.exf5 ♘xh4 23.♕xd5 c6 24.♕d1 ♘xf3+ 25.♕xf3 ♕xg5+ 26.♕g2±**;

B2) **17.♔h2** is the alternative, but 17.g3? is too early due to 17…♘xh3+ 18.♔g2 d5 and Black had good counterplay in Onischuk-Bogdanovich, Lutsk 2016.

16.♘xh4 ♕xh4 17.♕f3 g6 18.♖ad1 ♔g7

19.♗b3!?

This is advocated by Emms. White has several options, but the advantage is only slight:

A) **19.♘f1 ♘e6** 19…♕h5N 20.♘h2 ♕xf3 21.♘xf3 ♖e8 22.c4 g5 23.dxe5 dxe5 24.c5±. **20.dxe5?!** We suggest 20.♘h2!?N ♘g5 21.♕e2 ♗b6 22.dxe5 dxe5 23.♗xb6 cxb6 24.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 25.♕xf3 b5 26.♗b3 ♕e7 27.♖d2 ♗e6 28.♖ed1 ♗xb3 29.axb3 ♖ad8 30.♖d5 ♖xd5 31.♖xd5±. **20…dxe5 21.♗xa7 ♖xa7 22.♕g3 ♕xg3 23.♘xg3 ♖a8 24.♘f1 ♘f4 25.♖d2 ♗e6 26.♖ed1 a5 27.a3 ½-½** Areschenko-Sakaev, Russia tt 2008;

B) **19.a4!?N**:

B1) **19…g5? 20.dxe5** 20.♘f5+ wins as well. **20…dxe5 21.♗xa7 ♖xa7 22.♘f5+ ♗xf5 23.exf5 ♖e8 24.♖d7+–**;

B2) 19…♕f6 20.♔h2±;

B3) **19...♗e6 20.a5** Even 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.♗xa7 ♖xa7 22.♘f5+ gxf5 23.exf5 ♗d5 24.♖xd5 ♘xd5 25.♕xd5 might be interesting. **20...♕f6 21.♔h2 ♖fe8 22.b4 ♖e7 23.♗xf4 ♕xf4 24.♕xf4 exf4 25.♘e2 g5 26.g3 f3 27.♘g1 g4 28.hxg4 ♗xg4 29.♖e3 c5 30.♘xf3±**;

B4) 19...f6 20.♗b3 ♗d7 21.♘e2 ♘e6 22.♗xe6 ♗xe6 23.♘g3±.

C) 19.♘e2 ♘e6 (Bok-Soloviev, St Petersburg 2015) 20.♗b3N ♘g5 21.♕g3 ♕xg3 22.♘xg3±.

19...♕f6

19...♗e6N 20.♘f1±.

20.♔h2 ♖e8 21.♖d2 ♗e6 22.♗xe6 ♖xe6 23.dxe5 dxe5 24.♖d7 ♗b6 25.♖ed1 h5

Dominguez Perez-Quezada Perez, Havana 2008.

26.c4!?N ♖c6 27.b3 ♗c5 28.♗xc5 ♖xc5 29.♘f1 ♖c8 30.♘e3±

White's space advantage in the centre should give him an edge in this line.

Conclusion

We follow our main set-up plan with ♘g3 here, but the alternative 14.♘1h2 is also very interesting. Do remember to take back on e3 with the pawn after 12...♗xe3.

Chapter 8
Black plays …♗e6

As White's light-squared bishop is an important part of the strategy, it is natural to neutralise it in this way. We suggest allowing the exchange on b3, as White keeps a slight initiative and the concept is very easy to play and to remember. However, we also look at the critical approach 10.♗c2, to preserve the light-squared bishop. Black can choose between playing with or without …h7-h6 and exchanging on b3 or not. We divide our structure accordingly.

8.1 – Without …h7-h6

Black can indeed try to make do without this prophylactic move, but must be careful not to run into ♘g5 or ♗g5. As a rule an early …h7-h6 before ♗g5 will lead to the relevant sub-chapter of Chapter 8.2.

8.1.1 – 10…♗xb3

This is a very solid but slightly passive approach. Usually White plays ♘f1 followed by ♗g5.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 a6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 ♗e6

With this move Black wants to reduce the pressure on the light squares immediately. In principle White has two ways to deal with this. The bishop can retreat to c2 or White can just continue with his own plan and allow the exchange. We suggest this, as it is easier to handle, but we will also look at ♗c2 in the Strategy chapter. All White's pieces have natural squares and there are two basic plans: to get d3-d4 in or to transfer a knight to f5. After …h7-h6 we suggest putting the bishop on e3; otherwise it can also go to g5.

10.♖e1

10.♗c2!? is the alternative, which will be discussed in the game Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter.

10…♗xb3 11.♕xb3

11.axb3!? d5 12.♕e2 is the alternative, e.g. **12…♕d7** 12…dxe4 13.dxe4 ♘h5 14.♘c4 ♕f6 (Dolzhikova-Horn, Reykjavik Ech-tt-W 2015) 15.♘a5N ♘xa5 16.♖xa5 b5 17.c4±. **13.♘f1 d4 14.b4 ♖ad8 15.♖d1** 15.c4!?N. **15…♘e8 16.♘g3=** Hou Yifan-Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2015.

11…♖b8

11…♕d7 12.♘f1 ♖fe8

A) The main move 12…h6 leads to Chapter 8.2;

B) 12…♖ab8 transposes to the main line;

C) **12…♘h5**:

analysis diagram

C1) **13.d4!?N** is very interesting, as it uses the moment after Black's knight has left its post on f6 well, e.g.:

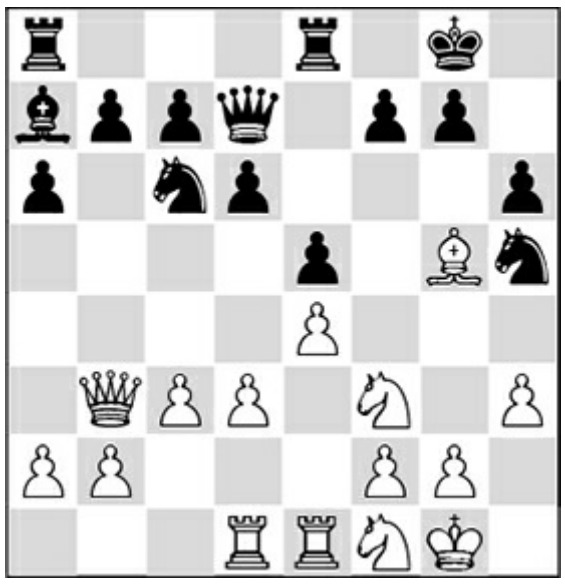
C11) **13…exd4?! 14.cxd4 ♘xd4?** (14…♘f6 15.♗e3±) runs into **15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.♕d1+–**;

C12) 13…♗b6 14.♗e3±;

C13) 13…♘f6 14.♗g5 exd4 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♖ad1 dxc3 17.♕xc3 ♕e6 18.♖d5 with very good compensation.

C2) 13.♗e3 ♖fe8 14.♗xa7 ♖xa7 15.d4± Brkic-Sokolov, Reykjavik Ech-tt 2015.

D) **12…♖fe8 13.♗g5** 13.♗e3N ♗xe3 14.♘xe3 ♘e7 15.d4 ♘xe4 16.♘f1 d5 17.♘xe5 ♕b5 18.♕c2±. **13…♘h5 14.♖ad1 h6** (Vocaturo-Di Paolo, Bratto 2010) is Bologan's suggestion in *Bologan's Black Weapons*.



analysis diagram

Now we opt for **15.♗c1N,** usually followed by d3-d4, e.g. **15…♗b6 16.d4 a5 17.a4±**

12.♘f1 ♕d7

12…♘h5 (Röckendorf-Krebs, GER email 2013) **13.♕d1!?N ♕f6** 13…♖e8 14.♗g5 ♕d7 15.d4 h6 16.♗e3 exd4 17.♘xd4 ♘xd4 18.cxd4 ♘f6 19.f3±; 13…d5 14.exd5 ♕xd5 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.♘xe3 ♕d7 17.♘c4±. **14.♘e3 ♗xe3 15.♗xe3 ♘f4 16.d4 h6 17.♗xf4 ♕xf4 18.♕d3±**

The main move 12…h6 leads to Chapter 8.2.

13.♘g3

A) **13.♕c2!?N**, to play on the queenside with **13...♖fe8** 13...d5 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.♘xe3± . **14.b4 ♘h5 15.a4**, is also interesting;

B) **13.♗e3** is another option, for example: **13...♗xe3 14.♘xe3** Or even 14.fxe3N. **14...♘e7 15.♖ad1 ♘g6 16.♕c2 ♘f4 17.d4**± Tausnev-Thurrott, LSS corr 2010.

13...♖fe8 14.♗g5

A) **14.♘h2 ♕e6 15.♕d1 d5 16.♕f3** is too slow: **16...dxe4 17.dxe4 ♘e7?!** 17...h6!N 18.♘f5 ♘e7 equalises. **18.♗g5 ♘d7 19.♖ad1 f6 20.♗c1 ♘f8 21.b3 ♖bd8 22.♘g4 ♔h8 23.h4** The battering ram rolls forward. **23...♗c5 24.h5 h6 25.♘e3**

analysis diagram

And a draw was agreed in Andriasyan-Socko, Kallithea tt 2008, but White has a long-lasting strategical initiative, e.g. **25...♕f7 26.♘ef5 b5 27.♘xe7 ♕xe7 28.♘f5 ♕f7 29.♕e2 ♘e6 30.g3 ♔h7 31.♔g2 ♗f8 32.b4 ♖xd1 33.♖xd1 ♖d8 34.♗e3 ♖xd1 35.♕xd1 ♕e8 36.♕d5 c6 37.♕d2 ♕xh5 38.♕d7 ♘f4+ 39.gxf4 ♕g4+ 40.♔f1 exf4 41.♗c5**±;

B) 14.♗e3!?N ♗xe3 15.fxe3 is a way to add more spice.

14...♕e6

We suggest keeping the queens on the board with

15.♕c2!?

to play in the centre and on the kingside. In the following we suggest exchanging on f6, which involves some strategical risk.

15.♖ad1 is a safe alternative, e.g. 15...♕xb3 16.axb3 ♘d7 17.b4 f6 (Brandenburg-Van den Doel, Dieren 2008) 18.♗d2N ♗b6 19.♖a1 a5 20.b5 ♘d8 21.d4 and White is very slightly better.

15...h6 16.♗xf6 ♕xf6 17.♖ad1 g6

A) 17…♕e6N 18.d4 ♕xa2? runs into 19.d5 ♘a5 20.♘h4 ♘c4 21.♖e2 ♔h7 22.♘hf5 g6 23.♕c1+–;

B) 17…♘d8N 18.d4 ♘e6 19.♘f5±.

18.♕d2 ♕f4?!

18…♔g7N 19.d4 ♘d8! (19…exd4 20.cxd4 ♗b6 21.♖e3 ♖e7 22.♘e2 ♖be8 23.♕c2±) equalises, e.g. **20.♘f1** 20.d5 ♕f4=. **20…♘e6 21.♘e3 ♘g5 22.♘xg5 ♕xg5 23.♕d3 exd4 24.cxd4 c6=**

19.♕xf4 exf4 20.♘e2 g5 21.g3 fxg3 22.♘xg3 ♔h7 23.d4 f6

(Pott-Ponting, LSS email 2009)

24.h4!?N ♖g8 25.h5 ♖bf8 26.♘h2 g4 27.♘f5 ♖f7 28.♔g2 ♘e7 29.♘f1±

Black's set-up is very solid, but a little passive. White can aim for d3-d4 in the long run, and sometimes ♗e3 followed by ♘xe3 or even fxe3 is a way to create some pressure.

If you feel that the recommended set-up with 10.♖e1 is a bit slow for you, take a deeper look at the game Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter.

8.1.2 – 10…♘d7 and 10…♘h5

If Black moves his king's knight early to try to bring it to either c5 or f4 and to enable …f7-f5, we suggest taking back on b3 in different ways to keep the queen on d1:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♘bd2 a6 7.♗b3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗a7 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♖e1

10…♘d7

A) Against **10…♘h5** we suggest following Kramnik with **11.d4! ♗xb3 12.♘xb3**.

analysis diagram

The big centre gives White a slight edge, for example: **12…♕f6** 12…♘f6N 13.♗g5±. **13.g3 ♖fe8 14.♔g2 ♕d8 15.♗g5 ♘f6 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♕xd8 ♖axd8 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♘h4**

♖d7 20.♖ad1 ♖ed8 21.♖xd7 ♖xd7 22.♔f3 ♗b6 23.♔e2 ♔f8 24.♖f1 ♘e7 25.♘d2 c6 26.♘c4 ♗a7 27.a4 b5 28.♘d2 ♗b6 29.♘hf3 ♘c8 30.♖a1 ♖a7 31.♘e1 ♘d6 32.♘d3 a5 33.g4 ♘c4? 34.♘xc4 bxc4 35.♘e1 ♗c5 36.♘f3 ♖b7 37.♖a2 ♖d7 38.♘d2 ♖d3 39.♘xc4 ♖xh3 40.♘xa5 ♖h2 41.♔d3 ♖xf2 42.♘xc6 ♖g2 43.a5 ♖xg4 44.b4 1-0 Kramnik-Xie Jun, Monaco blindfold 1996;

B) The direct 10…d5? is too risky due to 11.exd5 ♘xd5 (Tenti-Goldwaser, Tandil 2003) 12.♘xe5N ♘xe5 13.♖xe5 c6 14.♘f3±.

11.♘f1 ♗xb3 12.axb3

In this case we suggest taking with the pawn due to 12.♕xb3 ♘c5 13.♕c2 d5 14.♖d1 ♘e6 15.♕b3 ♘c5 with a draw agreed in Waitzkin-Ivanov, New York 1995.

12...f5 13.exf5 ♖xf5 14.♗e3 ♖f8

(King-Karolyi, Frunze 1987) 14…♗xe3 15.♘xe3 ♖f8 16.b4 ♔h8 17.♘d2± (Malakhov-Riazantsev, Russia tt 2007) 17.d4!?N exd4 18.♘xd4 ♘xd4 19.♕xd4 ♕f6 20.♘d5 ♕xd4 21.cxd4 c6 22.♖e7±.

15.b4!?N ♕f6 16.b5 axb5 17.♕b3+ ♔h8 18.♕xb5 ♗b6 19.♖xa8 ♖xa8 20.♘1d2 ♕g6 21.d4 exd4 22.cxd4 ♖a5 23.♕b3 d5 24.♘b1±

White exerts pressure against d5 and can also consider bringing the knight to c5. Against 10…♘h5 White achieves d3-d4 and the centre gives him an advantage. Against 10…♘d7, followed later by …f7-f5, we suggest playing on the queenside first and only playing d3-d4 later.

8.1.3 – Black plays …d6-d5

This is a very ambitious plan, especially with the bishop still on c5, which is often employed by Armenian super-grandmaster Levon Aronian. It is not easy to exploit the fact that …h7-h6 has not been played. Probably 9.h3!? is slightly more precise, as then …d6-d5 is more difficult to achieve. But we start with the other black sidelines.

8.1.3.1 – 8…♗a7

This usually transposes to the main line, as it is not easy to achieve a very quick …d6-d5 now.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 d6

For the immediate 7…d5 see Chapter 4.3.

8.♗b3 ♗a7

Here the direct **8…d5** is considered to be premature now and has been played only very rarely: **9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♖e1**

A) 10…f6N 11.d4 exd4 12.♘e4 ♗a7 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.cxd4 ♔h8 15.♘c5±;

B) 10…♘f6N 11.♘c4 ♘g4 12.♖e2 ♗f5 13.h3 ♘xf2 14.♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 15.♔xf2 ♖e8 16.d4 exd4 17.cxd4 ♗e4 18.♘ce5 ♘xe5 19.dxe5 ♕xd1 20.♗xd1 ♖ad8 21.♗f4±;

C) 10…♖e8? (Stojanovic-Curic, Belgrade 2006) 11.d4!N ♗a7 12.♘e4 ♗f5 13.♘g3 ♗g6 14.dxe5±;

D) 10…♘f4?N 11.d4 exd4 12.♘e4 ♗d6 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♕xd4±;

E) **10…♗g4 11.h3 ♗h5 12.♘e4 ♗b6 13.♘g3 ♗g6 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♖xe5 c6** (Shen-Colas, Arlington 2015) 15…♗xf2+?N 16.♔xf2 ♕f6+ 17.♕f3 ♕xe5 18.d4 ♕e7 19.♗xd5+–. **16.♗xd5N cxd5 17.♕f3 d4 18.c4 ♖e8 19.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 20.♗f4±**

9.h3 ♗e6 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♘f1 d5

Here we suggest exploiting the fact that Black has not played …h7-h6: 11…h6 is played most often and transposes to the main line – see Chapters 8.2.2 and 8.2.3.

12.♘g5 ♘a5

Sedina-Klek, Meissen tt 2013. **12…♕d7N 13.♘g3** 13.♘xe6 fxe6 14.♘h2±. **13…d4 14.♘xe6 fxe6 15.c4 ♗c5 16.a3 a5 17.♗a4±**

13.♗a4N b5 14.♗c2 dxe4 15.♘xe6 ♖xe6 16.dxe4 ♖d6

16…♕xd1?! 17.♖xd1 ♘c4 18.a4±.

17.♕e2 ♕e8 18.♘d2 ♖ad8 19.b4 ♘b7 20.a4 ♗b6 21.♖b1

21.♘f3 c5 22.axb5 axb5 23.bxc5 ♘xc5 24.♗a3±.

21…♖e6 22.c4 bxc4 23.♘xc4 ♗d4 24.♗a3±

This looks very good for White, who has the bishop pair and the better pawn structure. If Black plays …d6-d5, as in the lines above, White can counter quickly and directly. This is why Black either prepares it with …h7-h6 or does not play …♗a7.

8.1.3.2 – …d6-d5 with …♗c5

This is very quick and so White should be careful with the move order.

8.1.3.2.1 – 9.♖e1

After this, Aronian's concept probably leads to dynamic equality, and White also scores very badly in this line after 10…d5. Chapter 5.4.2 deals with ♗xe6 options against this black set-up as another alternative.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 d6 8.♗b3 ♗e6 9.♖e1

For 9.h3!?, which scores much better for White, see Chapter 8.1.3.2.1. 9.♘c4 and 9.♗c2 (for this retreat see Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter) are the two other main moves in this position. But only 9.♖e1 and 9.h3 fit well with our main set-up.

9…♖e8

A) 9…♘g4?! 10.♖e2± Ermenkov-Mitkov, Durres 2001;

B) 9…d5?N 10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♖xe5 ♗xb3 13.♘xb3 ♗d6 14.♖e1±;

C) Against Kramnik's **9…h6**, one option is **10.♗xe6** 10.h3 and 10.♘f1 are also playable, of course, and are dealt with in Chapter 8.2.2.1. **10…fxe6 11.b4** – see Chapter 5.4.2.

10.♘f1

Maybe 10.♗xe6 is an option here as well – see Chapter 5.4.2.

10…d5

11.exd5

A) The endgame after 11.♗g5 dxe4 12.dxe4 ♕xd1 13.♖axd1 ♗xb3 14.axb3 is also about equal, for example: 14...♘g4 15.♖e2 h6 16.♗h4 g5 17.♗g3 ♘f6 18.b4 ♗a7 19.h3 ♘h5 20.♗h2= (Caruana-Aronian, Zurich rapid 2015);

B) 11.♘g5N is met by 11...♗g4!=.

11...♗xd5 12.♗g5 ♗xb3 13.♕xb3

13.axb3N h6 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.b4 ♗b6 16.♕c2 ♖ad8 does not change much and should also be playable for Black.

13...h6

13...♕xd3N 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♕xb7 ♕d6 16.♕b3 ♖ab8 17.♕c2 e4 18.♘h4 ♕f4 19.g3 ♕e5 20.♖ad1±.

14.♗xf6

14.d4 ♗b6 (Janosi-Cossmann, Lechenicher SchachServer corr 2012) 15.♗h4N exd4 16.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.cxd4 ♘xd4 19.♘xd4 ♗xd4 20.♕g3+ ♔h8 21.♕xc7 ♕e5 22.♕xb7 ♗xf2+ 23.♔h1 ♖d8 24.♕xf7 ♕xb2 25.♖b1 ♕xb1 26.♕xf6+=.

14...♕xf6

It seems that White's initiative will peter out sooner or later, as Black's bishop is strong, e.g.:

15.♖e2

A) **15.♘1d2N ♕g6** 15...♕e6 16.♘c4 ♕f6 17.a4 ♖ad8 18.♖ad1±. **16.a4 ♗a7 17.♘c4 ♕xd3 18.♘cxe5 ♘xe5 19.♖xe5 ♖ad8 20.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21.♕xb7 ♗b6 22.♖e1 ♖e2 23.♖xe2 ♕xe2 24.♕c8+ ♔h7 25.♕f5+=**;

B) 15.a4!?N;

C) 15.♘e3!?N ♕g6 16.♖ad1 ♖ad8 17.♕xb7 ♘a5 18.♕e4 ♕xe4 19.dxe4 ♗xe3 20.fxe3 ♘c4=.

15...♗b6 16.♖ae1 ♖e6!N

16...♖e7?! 17.♘e3 ♗xe3 18.♖xe3 b6 (Igonin-Aleksandrov, Tashkent 2015) 19.h4!?N ♖d8 20.♕a4 a5 21.h5 ♖ed7 22.♕e4±.

17.♘e3 ♕g6 18.♘c4 ♕xd3 19.♘cxe5

19.♖d2 ♕g6 20.♘xb6 cxb6 21.♕xb6 e4 22.♘d4 ♘xd4 23.♕xd4 ♖ae8=.

19...♕b5 20.♕xb5 axb5 21.♘xc6 ♖xe2 22.♖xe2 bxc6 23.a3 c5=

We did not manage to find a convincing path against Black's idea after 9.♖e1. The engines like White, but this might be a case where they underestimate the long-term potential of Black's dark-squared bishop.

8.1.3.2.2 – 9.h3

This might be more precise, as Black cannot so easily achieve a quick …d6-d5, which can now be met by ♘g5 as …♗g4 is no longer possible:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 d6 8.♗b3 ♗e6 9.h3!?

9...♗xb3

A) **9...d5?!** can now be met by **10.♘g5 h6** (10...♗a7N 11.♘xe6 fxe6 12.exd5 exd5 13.♘e4 ♘e7 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.fxe3 ♔h8 16.♘xf6 gxf6 17.e4 c6 18.d4±) **11.♘xe6 fxe6** (Razumov-Kalugin, Samara 2008) **12.exd5N exd5 13.♘e4 ♗b6 14.♗e3**±;

B) 9...h6 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♗c2 transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.1;

C) 9...♗a7 10.♖e1 transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.2;

D) **9...♖e8 10.♖e1 h6** 10...♗xb3 is met by 11.♕xb3 d5 12.♘f1±; and 10...d5 by 11.♘g5N ♕d7 12.♘xe6 ♖xe6 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘e4±. **11.♗c2** transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.1;

E) **9...♕d7** can be met by **10.♖e1** and Black's most aggressive options do not work, e.g. **10...♗xh3?!N** 10...d5?N 11.exd5 ♗xd5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.♖xe5 ♗xb3 14.♕xb3 b6 15.♕c2 ♗d6 16.♖e2 ♖ae8 17.♘c4 ♖xe2 18.♕xe2 ♖e8 19.♗e3±. **11.gxh3 ♕xh3 12.♘f1 ♘g4** 12...♕g4+ 13.♔h1 ♗xf2 14.♘1h2 ♕h3 15.♖e2 ♘g4 16.♗d2±. **13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.fxe3 ♘a5 15.♘3h2 ♘xb3 16.♕xb3 ♖ae8 17.♖e2 ♖e6 18.♘xg4 ♖g6 19.♖g2 ♖xg4 20.♕c2**±

10.♕xb3 ♕d7

10...♘h5 is answered by 11.♘c4 b5 12.♘e3 ♘f4 13.♕d1 (13.♘d5!?N with the idea 13...♘xd3 14.♗g5 ♕d7 15.♖ad1 ♘f4 16.♗xf4 exf4 17.♘xf4± is also interesting) 13...♗b6 14.g3 ♘xh3+? (14...♘e6N 15.♘d5±) 15.♔g2 ♘g5 16.♘xg5 ♕xg5 17.♘f5 ♕f6 (Hoolt-Stefanova, Gibraltar 2014) 18.♖h1!N d5 (18...♘e7? 19.♕h5+–) 19.♕h5 ♕g6 20.♕f3 dxe4 21.dxe4 ♖ae8 22.♖h4 ♘e7 23.♖g4+–.

11.♘c4 h6 12.a4 ♖ab8 13.a5 ♖fe8 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.♘xe3 ♘e7

(Jakovenko-Aronian, Moscow Wch blitz 2009).

16.♔h2!?N ♘g6 17.g3±

This line mostly transposes to variations in which Black plays ...h7-h6. So 9.h3 seems to be preferable to 9.♖e1 and also scores better in practice. Furthermore, Kramnik, Adams and Bologan have played the position after 9.h3 with white, which sometimes arose via another order of moves.

8.2 – Black plays ...h7-h6 early

This is safe but also slow.

8.2.1 – Black does not follow up early with ...d6-d5

White will usually transfer the knight to g3 and play d3-d4 sooner or later. As usual, we suggest keeping the bishop on b3 as long as possible and only retreating it to c2 on the 13th move, but it is usually possible to move it directly after ...♗e6 – see Giri-Anand in the

Strategy chapter.

8.2.1.1 – Black does not exchange on b3 early

White has two strategies here. The usual ♘g3 can be played and later 13.♗c2, which is in the spirit of our set-up, and so it is our main recommendation to keep the repertoire coherent. But an early ♗e3, to take back with the knight on e3, also deserves attention.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♘bd2 a6 7.♗b3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗a7 9.h3 h6 10.♖e1 ♗e6 11.♘f1

11.♗c2!? is the alternative.

11...♖e8

A) **11...♘e7 12.♘g3 ♕d7** 12...♘g6 13.d4± transposes to Chapter 6.3. **13.d4 ♗xb3** After 13...♘g6 there is the following high-level game in which White dismantled Black completely: 14.♗c2 (14.d5? ♗xh3!∓) 14...c6 15.♗e3 ♖fd8 16.♕d2 ♕e8 17.♖ad1 ♗b6 18.c4! ♗xc4 19.♕c3 exd4 20.♘xd4 d5 21.exd5 ♗xd5 22.♗xh6+– ♕f8 23.♘df5 ♕c5 24.♕xc5 ♗xc5 25.♗xg7 ♘e8 26.♗c3 ♘f4 27.♘e4 ♗xe4 28.♖xe4 ♖xd1+ 29.♗xd1 ♘d5 30.♖g4+ ♔h7 31.♗e5 1-0 Kryvoruchko-Granda Zuniga, Spain tt 2015. **14.♕xb3 ♘g6 15.♗e3 ♖fe8 16.♖ad1 exd4**

analysis diagram

17.♗xd4!?N 17.♘xd4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♖xe4 19.♕xb7 ♖ee8 (Muzychuk-Zhukova, Lviv ch-UKR W 2014) 20.b3±. **17...♗xd4 18.cxd4 c6 19.e5 dxe5 20.dxe5 ♘d5 21.♕c2 ♖e6 22.♘f5** ±;

B) 11...d5 transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.2.1;

C) After 11...♕d7:

C1) 12.♘g3 is our main recommendation, which transposes after 12...♖fe8. For 12...♗xb3 13.♕xb3 see the next chapter variation 13.♘g3. After 12...♗xb3, 13.axb3 is also interesting, e.g. 13...d5 14.b4 dxe4 15.dxe4 ♕xd1 16.♖xd1 ♖fd8 17.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 18.♔f1 (Bologan-Tomashevsky, Russia tt 2006) and the typical ending is almost equal, but Bologan went on to win later;

C2) 12.♗e3 ♖fe8 13.♗xa7 ♖xa7 14.♘e3 ♖aa8 transposes to the 12.♗e3 variation after 13...♕d7, but with one more move on the scoresheet;

C3) **12.♗a4!?** is an original recent idea: **12...b5 13.♗c2 ♖fe8 14.♘g3** 14.d4!?N. **14...d5 15.exd5 ♗xd5 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.♖xe3 ♖e7 18.♘h4 ♗e6 19.♕f3** 19.♘h5!?N. **19...♘d5 20.♖ee1 g6 21.♘e4 ♔g7 22.♕g3 ♕e8 23.♘c5**± Vallejo Pons-Getz, Gjakova Ech 2016.

12.♘g3

Our standard set-up.

A) **12.♗e3!?** is a major alternative: **12...♗xe3** 12...d5 13.♗xa7 ♖xa7 14.exd5 ♗xd5 15.♗a4 b5 16.♗c2 ♖a8 (Yudasin-Adams, Beograd tt 1999) 17.♘3d2N ♕d6 18.♘e3±;

12…♗xb3 13.♕xb3 ♕d7 transposes to the main line of the next chapter. **13.♘xe3**:

A1) **13…d5 14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 ♗xd5 16.d4 e4 17.♘d2 f5 18.f3 e3 19.f4 ♘a5 20.♗xd5+ ♕xd5 21.♘f1 ♘c4** 21…♕b5 22.♘xe3 ♖e4 23.♕d2 ♖ae8 24.b3 b6 25.c4 ♕d7 26.♘c2 ♘b7 27.♖xe4 ♖xe4 28.♖e1 ♘d6 (Adams-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2000) 29.♕h2N b5 30.c5 ♖xe1 31.♘xe1 ♘e4 32.♕e3±. **22.b3 ♘d6 23.♘xe3 ♕f7 24.♕f3 ♖e4 25.♘f1 ♖ae8 26.♖e3**± Tausnev-Moreira, LSServer email 2010;

A2) 13…♗xb3 14.♕xb3 ♕d7 transposes to the main line of the next chapter;

A3) After **13…♕d7**

analysis diagram

White has tried many moves and we suggest: **14.♘h2** 14.♗xe6 ♕xe6 15.c4 is one major alternative, while 14.♘h4 is played most often. **14…d5** 14…♘e7 15.♘hg4 ♘xg4 16.hxg4 d5 17.d4 exd4 18.cxd4 ♖ad8 (18…f6 19.♖c1 c6 20.e5± Rogos-Janous, ICCF email 2009) 19.e5 c5 20.dxc5 (Spasov-Nikolov, Bulgaria tt 2015) 20…♘c6N 21.f4±. **15.♘hg4 ♘xg4 16.exd5 ♘xe3 17.dxe6 ♘xd1 18.exd7 ♖e7 19.♖axd1!?N** 19.♗xd1 ♖xd7 20.♗f3 ♖xd3 21.♗xc6 bxc6 22.♖xe5 ♖d2= Markgraf-Baramidze, Saarbrücken ch-GER 2009. **19…♖xd7 20.♗a4 b5 21.♗c2 ♖ad8 22.♖e4 f6 23.♖de1 ♔f7 24.f4**±

B) 12.♗c2 is the usual alternative, to preserve the bishop.

12…♕d7

Here White has many alternatives. For 12…♗xb3 13.♕xb3 (here 13.axb3 is also interesting) 13…♕d7 see the next chapter.

13.♗c2

A) For 13.♘h4 see Socko-Brunello in the Strategy chapter;

B) **13.♗xe6 ♕xe6 14.♘f5** 14.d4, as in Asrian-Pashikian, Armenia tt 2007, leads to equality after the strong move 14…d5!N 15.exd5 ♕xd5 16.dxe5 ♕xd1 17.♖xd1 ♘xe5=.

analysis diagram

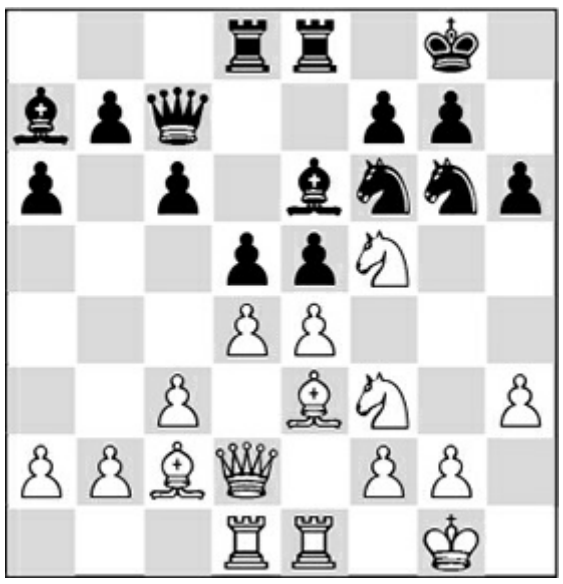
14…♘e7!N 14…d5? (Cossmann-Nowak, LSS email 2011) runs into 15.♗xh6N gxh6 16.♘xh6+ ♔g7 17.♘f5+ ♔g8 18.♘g5 ♕d7 19.♕f3 ♘e7 20.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 21.exd5 ♕d6 22.♖e4 with a strong attack. **15.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 16.♗e3=**

13...♖ad8

A) For the main move 13…d5, see Chapter 8.2.2.2;

B) 13…♗xh3?N 14.gxh3 ♕xh3 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.♖xe3 ♘g4 17.♖e2 ♖e6 18.♕f1+–;

C) **13…♘e7?!** leads the game to the waters of Chapter 6, e.g. **14.d4 ♘g6 15.♗e3 c6 16.♕d2 ♕c7 17.♖ad1** The direct 17.♘f5!?N, to meet 17…d5? with 18.♘xg7 ♔xg7 19.♗xh6+ ♔h7 (19…♔h8 20.exd5 ♗xd5 21.♘xe5 ♖xe5 22.dxe5 ♘h7 23.♗e3+–) 20.exd5 cxd5 21.♖xe5, is also strong. **17…♖ad8 18.♘f5 d5**



analysis diagram

19.♘xg7! ♔xg7 20.♗xh6+ ♔h8 21.♗g5 ♘h7 22.♗xd8 ♕xd8 23.exd5 ♗xd5 24.♗xg6 fxg6 25.♘xe5+– Predojevic-Gyimesi, Croatia tt 2007.

14.d4

The alternative approach 14.♕e2!? leads to the game Areschenko-Alexandrov, which is covered in the Strategy chapter.

14...exd4

14…d5?N 15.dxe5 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♕xd7 ♖xd7 18.♗xe4±.

15.cxd4 d5 16.e5 ♘e4

(Gazikova-Grgic, Zillertal tt 2015)

17.♗e3N ♘xg3 18.fxg3 ♗f5 19.♗xf5 ♕xf5 20.g4 ♕d7 21.♕d2 ♗b6 22.b4

And White has slightly more space on both wings, for example:

22...♖e6 23.♔h1 f6 24.exf6 ♖xf6 25.♗g1 ♖e8 26.a4 ♖fe6 27.♖xe6

♕xe6 28.♕c3

28.g5!?±.

28...♕d7 29.♖f1 ♘d8 30.b5 axb5 31.♘e5 ♕d6 32.axb5 ♘e6 33.♘f3±

One idea is to follow up with 34.♗h2. This set-up gives White free play in the centre with d3-d4, often followed by ♘f5. So most often Black plays …d6-d5 before White can bring sufficient forces into the kingside attack.

8.2.1.2 – Black exchanges on b3

This, of course, is only possible if White follows our main recommendation and does not retreat with ♗c2 after …♗e6. The exchange reduces White's potential and the resulting positions have a drawish tendency, as White's initiative is only very slight. Again White has two strategies. The usual ♘g3 can be played, which is in the spirit of our set-up and is thus our main recommendation to keep the repertoire coherent. But an early ♗e3, to take back with the knight on e3, also deserves attention.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 a6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 h6 10.♖e1 ♗e6 11.♘f1

11.♗c2 is the alternative.

11...♗xb3 12.♕xb3

12.axb3!? comes strongly into consideration, as White's ♘f1 is more useful than Black's …h7-h6.

analysis diagram

A) **12...♘h5?! 13.g4 ♘f4?! 14.♗xf4 exf4 15.d4 ♘e7 16.b4 ♘g6 17.♕d3** 17.e5!?N. **17...c6** (Klinova-Harika, Cappelle-la-Grande 2011) **18.♘1d2N ♖e8 19.♘c4±**;

B) After **12...d5** (Aaron-Betaneli, Arlington 2010), **13.♕c2!?N** might be interesting, as the pawn on e4 is then protected, e.g.

analysis diagram

13...dxe4 13...♖e8 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.♘xe3±. **14.dxe4 ♕d7 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.♘xe3 ♖ad8 17.♖ad1 ♕e6 18.b4 ♘e7 19.c4±**;

C) **12...♖e8**:

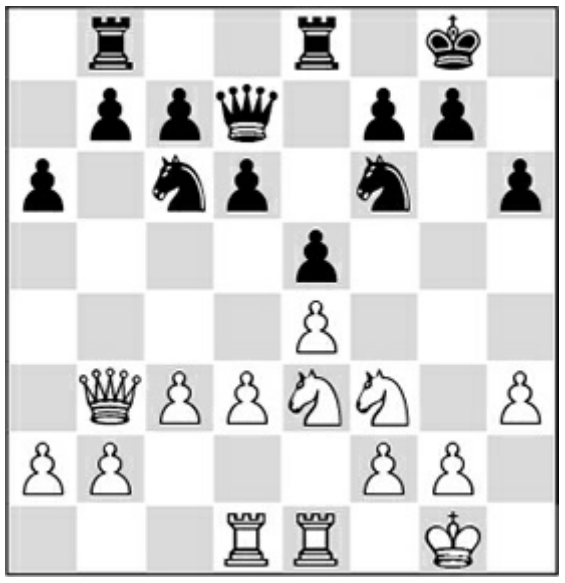
C1) **13.♘h4!?** is a favourite of the engines. **13...d5** Thorsteinsdottir-Maack, Reykjavik 2011; 13...♘h7 14.♘f5 ♘e7 15.♘1g3 ♘xf5 16.♘xf5 and a draw was agreed in Magem Badals-Zhu Chen, Beijing 1998, but White is slightly better. **14.♕f3N ♖e6 15.♘f5±**;

C2) **13.♘3h2 ♕d7 14.♕f3 ♕e6 15.b4** In fact the move order of Leko-Kramnik was 15.♘g3 ♘e7 (as 15...♕xb3? runs into 16.♘f5±, Emms) 16.b4. **15...♘e7 16.♘g3 c6 17.♘g4 ♘xg4** 17...♘h7?! 18.♗e3 ♗xe3 19.♕xe3 ♖ad8 20.d4± Leko-Adams, Sarajevo 1999. **18.hxg4 d5 19.♘f5 ♖ad8 20.g3 f6 21.♔g2 dxe4 22.dxe4 ♘xf5 23.gxf5 ♕c4 24.♗e3 ♗xe3 ½-½** Leko-Kramnik, Mexico City Wch 2007.

12...♕d7

This is played most often as White cannot take on b7 anyway. The alternative is **12...♖b8**:

A) **13.♗e3!?** is played most often. **13...♗xe3 14.♘xe3 ♕d7** 14...♘e7 15.♕c2 c6 16.d4 ♕c7 17.a4 b5 (Sikula-Jeric, Latschach 2007) 18.dxe5!?N dxe5 19.c4 ♘g6 20.cxb5 axb5 21.g3±. **15.♖ad1 ♖fe8** White has tried many moves here and the advantage is small, but it is still there, e.g.:



analysis diagram

16.♕c2 ♕e6 17.b4 b5 18.a3 a5 19.♖c1 (½-½ Noble-Michalek, ICCF email 2009) **19...axb4N 20.cxb4 ♖b6 21.♕b2 ♕d7 22.♘f5 ♘e7 23.♘g3 ♘g6 24.d4 exd4 25.♘xd4 ♘e5 26.♕e2 c6 27.♘gf5 ♖a6 28.♕e3 ♘g6 29.♕d3±**;

B) **13.♘g3 ♖e8 14.♗e3 ♗xe3**

analysis diagram

15.♖xe3 15.fxe3!? adds more spice, e.g. 15...♘e7 16.♔h2 ♕d7 17.♖e2 ♘g6 18.♖f1 c6 19.♖ef2 d5 20.exd5 cxd5 21.♘d2 ♖e6 22.♘f5 (Vorobiov-Grischuk, Moscow blitz 2004), with attacking chances on the kingside. **15...♕d7** (15...d5 16.♖d1 ♕d6 17.♖ee1 ♘a5 (Vecek-Aymard, ICCF email 2011) 18.♕c2!?N ♘c6 19.♘f5 ♕e6 20.a4 dxe4 21.dxe4 ♖bd8 22.♘e3 ♖xd1 23.♖xd1 ♘a5 24.c4 c5 25.♘d5 ♖c8 26.♘h4±) is given by Jan Gustafsson on his ChessBase DVD, and now we suggest **16.d4!?N** when White has a slight space advantage.

13.♗e3

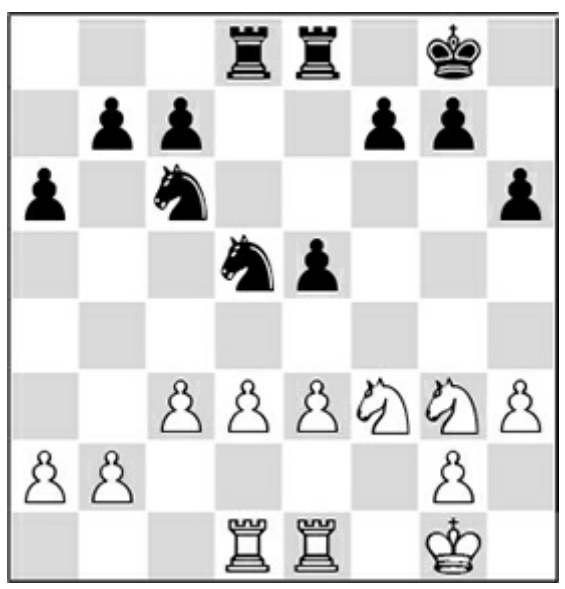
Here we suggest deviating from our standard set-up and bringing the knight on f1 into the game via e3, or alternatively taking back on e3 with the pawn after 13.♘g3. The alternative is the original **13.♘g3 ♖fe8 14.♗e3 ♗xe3**

analysis diagram

Usually we would suggest recapturing with a piece on e3 in situations such as this, but here there is very little to choose between the two captures.

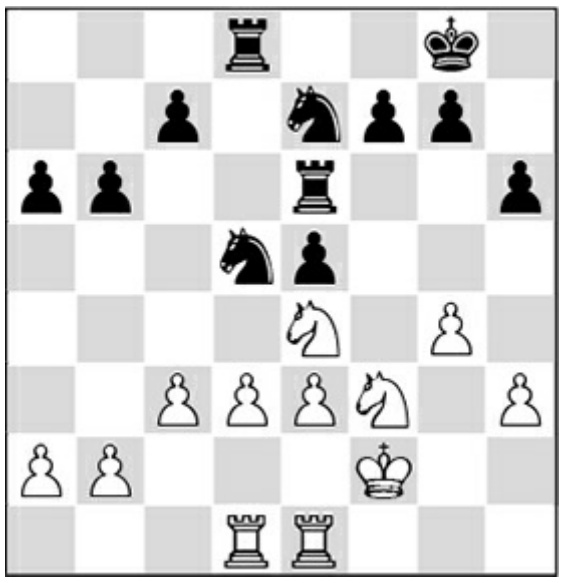
15.♖xe3 d5 16.♖e2 dxe4 17.dxe4 ♘a5 (17...♕e6!?N) 18.♕c2 ♖ad8 19.♖d2 ♕e6 20.b3 ♖xd2 21.♕xd2 ♘c6 22.♖d1 ♖d8 23.♕e2 ♖d6 24.♘h4 ♘e7 25.♕f3 g6 26.♕e2 ♔g7 was a level position in Harikrishna-Stern, Berlin Wch blitz 2015.

Our view is that taking with the pawn adds a little more excitement to the game: **15.fxe3 d5 16.exd5 ♕xd5 17.♕xd5** 17.♘e4N ♕e6 18.♕xe6 ♖xe6 19.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 20.d4 represents a slight improvement here for White. **17...♘xd5 18.♖ad1 ♖ad8**



analysis diagram

19.♘e4 b6 20.g4 ♖e6 21.♔f2 ♘ce7 and now:



analysis diagram

In this position from Durarbayli-Caruana, Las Vegas 2015, we suggest continuing with **22.c4N ♘b4** (22…♘f6 23.♘c3 b5 24.b3 b4 25.♘e4 ♘xe4+ 26.dxe4±) **23.d4 exd4** (23…f5 24.gxf5 ♘xf5 25.dxe5±) **24.exd4 f5 25.♘c3 ♖xe1 26.♘xe1 ♖f8 27.♔g3 fxg4 28.hxg4 ♖f1 29.d5 a5 30.a3 ♘a6 31.♘d3**±.

13…♖fe8

13…♗xe3 14.♘xe3 ♖fe8 14…♘e7 15.d4 ♘g6 (15…exd4 16.cxd4 d5 17.e5 ♘h5 18.♖ac1 ± Wosch-Vaassen, LSS email 2010) 16.♖ad1 ♕b5 17.♕c2 ♖fe8 (Ciornas-Romero Sanchez, ICCF email 2007) 18.♘f5N ♕c6 19.♔h2 exd4 20.♘3xd4 ♕b6 21.♖e3±. **15.♖ad1** 15.a4 is the alternative. **15…♘e7 16.♔h2**

analysis diagram

This is a typical prophylaxis to meet …♘g6 with g2-g3. White's knights are slightly more effective than Black's here. **16…a5 17.a4 ♕c6 18.♕c2 ♘g6 19.g3**± Tausnev-Nicolenco, LSS email 2011.

14.♗xa7 ♖xa7 15.♘g3 ♕e6 16.♕a4 b5 17.♕c2 ♘b8

17…♘d8 18.d4 ♘b7 19.a4 ♖aa8 20.♕e2 c6 21.♘f5 ♘d7 22.axb5 axb5 23.♘3h4± Hammerschmidt-Goyeneche, LSS email 2012.

18.a4 ♖b7 19.axb5 axb5 20.d4

20.♘f5N d5 21.b4±.

20…g6 21.♕d2 ♔h7

And here instead of

22.♘h2 b4

which led to an immediate draw in Movsesian-Short, Wijk aan Zee 2008, White could have kept an edge with 22.d5N ♕e7 23.b4± or 22.b4N.

In general the lines with …♗xb3 have a large drawish tendency, so you should consider

the retreat ♗c2 if you want to preserve more potential on the board. If Black has already played …h7-h6 then taking back with axb3 comes strongly into consideration as well. Furthermore you have two options: the standard set-up with ♘g3 and maybe later even ♗e3 to meet …♗xe3 with fxe3, or ♗e3 early to take back on e3 with the knight.

8.2.2 – Black plays …d6-d5 early

Unfortunately the …d6-d5 break cannot always be answered in one and the same way. The specifics of the situation must be taken into consideration. Basically White has two options: to keep the position with ♕e2 and to play ♘d2-f1-g3 to launch a slow-burning kingside attack (see e.g. Areschenko-Aleksandrov in the Strategy chapter) or to take on d5. Usually we recommend the latter and then play on both wings with options like b2-b4, a2-a4 on the queenside and ♘f5 on the kingside.

8.2.2.1 – Black keeps the bishop on c5

Against an early …h7-h6 with the bishop on c5 White can try to make do without h2-h3, but our main line is to follow our basic set-up plan and meet …d6-d5 with exd5 as usual. An important point is the retreat 11.♗c2, which is different from our standard guideline to stay on b3 as long as possible. The reason is that the knight on d2 can go directly to e4 or c4 in this line, so ♘f1 is not needed.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 a6 7.♗b3 0-0 8.♘bd2 h6

9.♖e1

Here this is probably slightly more precise than 9.h3, which is playable as well, of course. The reason is that …♘g4 is not so dangerous here, as Black has already played …h7-h6 and White wants to play ♖e1 anyway to make …d6-d5 more difficult to achieve, while in some lines he can make do without h2-h3. But if White wants to preserve the light-squared bishop then 9.h3 should be played.

9…♖e8

A) 9…d5? 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♖xe5 c6 13.d4 ♗d6 14.♖e1±;

B) **9…♗e6!?** is Kramnik's move order to exchange the bishops. **10.♘f1** For the alternative 10.♗xe6!?, which leads to completely different pastures and is our main recommendation here, see Chapter 5.4.2. **10…d5** 10…♗xb3 11.♕xb3 ♕d7 12.♗e3 (12.♘g3 ♖ab8 (Glaser-Borner, Germany, ch-FRG corr 1988) 13.♕c2!?N ♗a7 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.fxe3 is another way, which adds more spice) 12…♗xe3 13.♘xe3 ♖fe8 14.♖ad1 b5 (Zhigalko-Kramnik, Berlin Wch blitz 2015) 15.♕c2N ♕e6 (15…♘e7 16.d4±) 16.a4 b4 (16…d5 17.h3 ♖ad8 18.axb5 axb5 19.♖a1±) 17.d4 b3 18.♕c1 exd4 19.cxd4± ♕xe4? 20.♘d2+–. **11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♘g3 ♖e8** 12…♗d6 13.d4 exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.♕xd4 c5 16.♕d3 ♗xg3 17.♕xg3 ♕f6 18.♗d2 ♖ac8 (Skripchenko-Huschenbeth, Germany

Bundesliga 2007/08) 19.♖ad1N ♖fd8 20.h3 c4 21.♗c2 ♘e7 22.♗e3±. **13.h3** ♗**a7** transposes to the line 13…♘xd5;

C) **9…♘g4?! 10.♖e2 ♔h8** 10…♘f6 11.♘f1 ♘h5 12.d4 ♗b6 13.♖e1 exd4 14.♘xd4± Cretu-Bolz, ICCF email 2011. **11.h3 f5?!N** 11…♘f6 12.♘f1 ♘h5 13.d4± Tolonen-Heino, Finland tt 2000/01. **12.♕e1 ♗a7 13.exf5 ♘xf2 14.♖xf2 ♗xf5 15.♗c2** 15.♘e4!?. **15…d5 16.♘f1 e4 17.dxe4 ♗xf2+ 18.♕xf2 ♗xe4 19.♗e3 ♘e5 20.♘1h2±**

10.h3

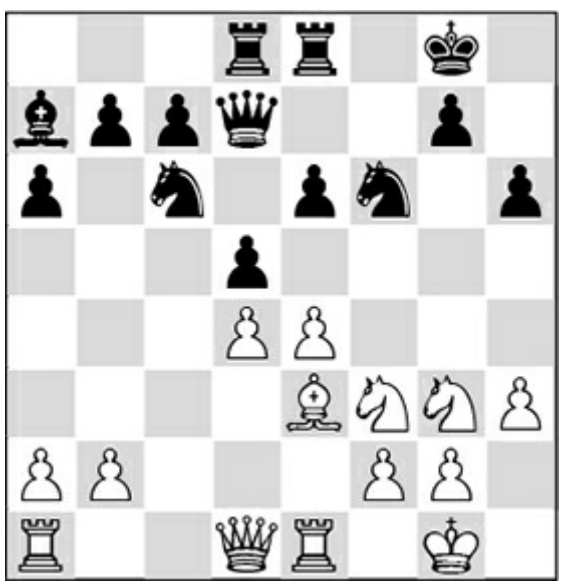
Against this move order the direct **10.♘f1!?** is very interesting, to try to make do without h2-h3, e.g. **10…♗e6** 10…♗a7 11.h3 ♗e6 12.♘g3 transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.2. **11.♗xe6** As usual, 11.♗c2!? is also interesting, e.g. 11…♗a7 (11…d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♘g3 ♗a7 14.h3 transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.2.2) 12.♘g3 d5 13.exd5 ♗xd5 14.h3 transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.2.3. **11…fxe6 12.b4 ♗a7** (Cretu-Helmer, ICCF email 2011) **13.♘g3N ♘e7 14.d4 ♘c6 15.a3 ♖f8 16.h3 ♕e8 17.♗e3 ♘h5 18.♔h2 ♘xg3 19.fxg3 ♕g6 20.♕d3±**

10…♗e6

10…d5? 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.d4 (12.♘c4!?N ♗d6 13.♘xd6 ♕xd6 14.d4 e4 15.♘e5±) 12…♗a7 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♖xe5 15.dxe5 ♘f4?! 16.♕f3± Yaver-Celik, Manavgat 2015.

11.♗c2!?

A) We prefer this retreat here as after **11.♘f1 d5** White should probably choose the set-up without exd5, which in our repertoire is not the main option. After 11…♕d7 12.♗xe6 fxe6 13.d4 exd4 14.cxd4 ♗a7 15.♘g3 ♖ad8 16.♗e3 d5



analysis diagram

it is important not to play 17.♘e5?! (17.e5N ♘e4 18.♕d3±) 17…♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♘xe4 19.♗xa7 ♘xg3 20.fxg3 b6= Vorobiov-Mihajlov, Stockholm 2016. **12.♕e2** As 12.exd5 ♗xd5 13.♗c2 can now be met by 13…e4!?N. **12…♕d7 13.♘g3 ♖ad8 14.♗c2 b5** (Wei Yi-

Zhao Jun, Danzhou 2014) For 14…♗a7 see Areschenko-Aleksandrov in the Strategy chapter. **15.♖d1N** and it is more or less equal;

B) A real alternative is 11.♗xe6!? ♖xe6 12.b4 ♗a7 13.a4 d5 14.♕c2 d4 15.♗b2 dxc3 16.♗xc3 ♘d4 17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 (Salgado Lopez-Adams, Gibraltar 2013) 18.♖ac1N c6 19.♘b3±. For more on ♗xe6 lines, see Chapter 5.4.2;

C) 11.♘c4 is another main line.

11...d5

11…♗a7 12.♘f1 d5 transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.2.

12.exd5 ♗xd5

12…♕xd5 13.♘f1 13.b4!? ♗a7 14.♗b2 (14.♘f1N seems like a better version of the next note and should probably be preferred) 14…♗f5?! (Nevednichy-Sanal, Golden Sands 2013) (14…♕d7!∞ △ 15.♘xe5? ♘xe5 16.♖xe5 ♗xh3 17.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 18.gxh3 ♗xf2+! 19.♔g2 ♘d5 20.♕f3 ♗a7–+) 15.c4!N ♕d8 (15…♕d7 16.♗a4±) 16.♗a4 ♘d7 17.♗xc6 bxc6 18.c5 ♖b8 19.♗c3 ♗xd3 20.♖e3 ♗g6 21.♘b3 f6 22.♘h4 ♘f8 23.♘xg6 ♘xg6 24.♘a5±. **13…♖ad8 14.♘g3 ♗f8** 14…♕d7N 15.♗d2± ♗xh3? 16.gxh3 ♕xh3 17.d4 exd4 18.♗f5±. **15.♗e3 ♕d7** (Asis Gargatagli-Balogh, Barcelona 2015) **16.♗d2N ♗d6** 16…g6 17.♕c1 ♔h7 18.♘xe5 ♘xe5 19.♖xe5±. **17.b4±**

13.b4

It's important to gain space on the queenside and to force Black to decide where to put the bishop.

13...♗a7

13…♗f8 14.♗b2 ♕d6 (Velikic-Ivanova, Halkidiki jr-W 2015) 15.a3!?N with the idea 16.c4 is better for White, e.g. 15…♘h5 16.♘e4 ♗xe4 17.♖xe4 ♖ad8 18.♕f1 ♘f6 19.♖ee1±.

14.a4 b5

15.♗b2

The direct **15.♘e4** is also possible, but Black should be able to neutralise White's slight initiative: **15…♘xe4 16.dxe4 ♗c4** and now:

A) 17.♕xd8N ♖exd8 18.♘d2 ♗e6 19.♘f1 ♗b6=;

B) **17.♗b3N** might be interesting, but White's initiative is only very slight, e.g. **17…♕xd1 18.♗xd1 ♖ed8** 18…a5 19.axb5 ♗xb5 20.bxa5 ♘xa5 21.♖xa5 ♗xf2+ 22.♔xf2 ♖xa5 23.♗b3 ♗a4 24.♗a2 ♗b5 25.♗d5 c6 26.♗b3 ♗a4 27.♗xa4 ♖xa4 28.♖e2±; 18…♖ad8 19.♘d2 ♗d3 20.♗b3±. **19.♘d2 ♗e6 20.♗e2 ♘e7 21.♘f1 ♘g6 22.♖d1 ♖db8 23.axb5 axb5 24.♖a3 c6 25.♖d6 ♘e7 26.♗g4 ♗xg4 27.hxg4 ♗b6 28.♖xa8 ♖xa8 29.♗e3 ♗xe3 30.♘xe3=**;

C) **17.♗e3 ♗xe3 18.♖xe3 ♕xd1+ 19.♖xd1 ♖ed8** 19…♖ad8 20.♖ee1 f6 21.♘d2 ♗d3 22.♗b3+ ♔f8 (Nevednichy-Melkumyan, Albena 2013) 23.axb5!?N axb5 24.♖a1 ♖d6 25.♗d1 ♖ed8 26.♘b3±. **20.♖ee1 ♔f8 21.♘d2 ♗e6 22.♘b3 ♖xd1 23.♖xd1 ♗xb3**

24.♗xb3 ♖d8 25.♖d5 ♖xd5 26.exd5 ♘b8= Brkic-Erdös, Biel 2015.

15...♕d6

A) 15...♕b8!? 16.♘f1 ♕b6 17.♘e3 ♖ad8 (Hou Yifan-Eljanov, Wijk aan Zee 2016) 18.♘d2!?N ♗e6 19.♕f3⩲;

B) **15...♗b6!?** is probably the best move. **16.♖c1** 16.♘f1N allows Black to clarify matters with 16...e4=; 16.♕c1N ♖b8 17.axb5 axb5 18.c4 ♗xf3 19.♘xf3 ♘xb4 20.♖xe5 ♖xe5 21.♗xe5 ♘e8=; 16.♘e4N ♘xe4 17.dxe4 ♗c4=. **16...♖b8 17.♗b1 ♕d7 18.♘e4** 18.axb5!?N axb5 19.c4 ♗xf3 20.♘xf3 ♗d4 21.cxb5 ♗xb2 22.♖xc6 ♖xb5 23.♕c2 ♖xb4 24.♖xc7⩲. **18...♘xe4?!** 18...♕e6!?N 19.a5 ♗a7 20.♘g3 ♕d7 (20...♖bd8 21.c4 bxc4 22.♘xe5⩲) 21.♘h4 ♗e6 22.♕f3 ♕d5 23.♕e2 ♖bd8 24.♘hf5 ♔h8 25.♗c2=. **19.dxe4 ♗e6 20.♕xd7 ♗xd7 21.a5 ♗a7 22.♗a2 ♖bd8** (Kadric-Sevian, Dallas tt 2016) **23.♗d5!?N ♔f8 24.c4⩲**

16.♘e4 ♕e6

(Bok-Abasov, Wijk aan Zee 2016)

17.♘g3!?N ♕d7

17...♖ad8? 18.d4⩲.

18.♘h4

White's play on the kingside is not easy to deal with, as Black has problems getting dynamic counterplay. We analyse a few lines, but more practical tests are needed, as the position is very delicate:

18...♗e6

18...♖ad8 19.♘hf5 ♗b6 20.♕d2 ♘e7 21.♖xe5 ♘xf5 22.♖xf5 ♗b7 23.♖xf6 gxf6 24.d4 ♕d5 25.f3 ♕g5 26.♕f2 ♕h4 27.♗d3⩲.

19.♕f3 ♕d5

19...♗d5 20.♘e4 ♘h7 21.♗c1 ♕e6 22.♗e3 ♗xe3 23.♕xe3 f5 24.♘c5⩲.

20.♘e4

Even **20.♕e2 ♕d7 21.♘h5 ♘xh5 22.♕xh5 ♖ad8** is playable, but probably gives no more than dynamic equality, e.g.

analysis diagram

23.♗c1 23.axb5 axb5 24.♖xa7 ♘xa7 25.♖e3 is also possible due to 25...f5 26.♖g3 f4 27.♖g6 ♗f7 28.♕xh6 ♗xg6 29.♕xg6 ♕e6 30.♗b3 ♕xb3 31.♘f5 ♖e7 32.♘xe7+ ♔f8 33.♕g5=.

A) 23...f6 24.axb5 axb5 25.♗xh6 gxh6 26.d4 exd4 27.♗e4 dxc3 28.♕g6+ ♕g7 29.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 30.♗xc6 ♗d7 31.♖xe8 ♗xe8 32.♖xa7 ♖d1+ 33.♔h2 ♗xc6 34.♖xc7+ ♗d7 35.♖xc3±;

B) 23...f5? 24.axb5 axb5 25.d4 exd4 26.♗xh6 d3 27.♗xd3 ♕xd3 28.♗xg7 ♕g3 29.♖xa7 ♕xg7 30.♘xf5 ♗f7 31.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 32.♘xg7 ♗xh5 33.♖xc7 ♗f7 34.♘f5±;

C) **23...♗b6 24.♗e3** 24.♗xh6 gxh6 25.d4 ♘xd4 26.♖ad1 ♕c6 27.♕xh6 ♘xc2 28.♕g5+=. **24...♗xe3 25.♖xe3 f5 26.axb5 axb5 27.♖ae1 f4 28.♖e4 ♗d5 29.♕e2 ♕e7 30.♘f3 ♗xe4 31.♕xe4 ♕d6 32.d4 exd4 33.♕h7+ ♔f7 34.♘g5+ hxg5 35.♕h5+=**

20...♘xe4 21.♖xe4 ♖ad8

21...♕d8 22.d4. White now has dangerous dynamic potential, e.g.

analysis diagram

22...♗d5 (22...exd4 23.axb5 axb5 24.cxd4 ♘xb4 25.d5 ♘xc2 26.dxe6 ♖xe6 27.♖xe6 fxe6 28.♖d1 ♘d4 29.♕e4±) 23.♘f5 ♕f6 24.♗c1 ♔f8 25.♘e3 ♕xf3 26.gxf3 ♗e6 27.d5 ♗xe3 28.dxe6 ♗xc1 29.exf7 ♔xf7 30.♖xc1±.

22.♗c1 ♕d7

22...f5 23.♖e1 ♕xf3 (23...♕d7 24.♗e3 transposes) 24.♘xf3 ♗f7 25.♗e3 ♗xe3 26.♖xe3 ♗d5 27.♘d2±.

23.♖e1 f5 24.♗e3 ♗xe3 25.♕xe3±

Against this set-up White can try to make do without h2-h3 altogether. Our main suggestion is just to follow the general set-up plan with one exception: 11.♗c2!? is recommended, as the knight on d2 can often enter the game directly via e4 after Black's ...

d6-d5 break. 15…♗b6 looks more critical than 15…♕d6 and Black should focus on this move.

8.2.2.2 – Black plays …♗a7

This prophylactic measure prevents d3-d4 or b2-b4 from gaining time and is most often played.

8.2.2.2.1 – 11…d5

Against this direct approach White has a new dangerous option in 13.♘1h2, which we suggest. But there is also nothing wrong with the normal 13.♘g3 as well, of course. In this move order even 13.♘xe5 is an option. Furthermore, White can play 11.♗c2 if 11…d5 should be made more difficult.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♖e1 h6 11.♘f1

This follows our standard approach. 11.♗c2!? is an alternative, with the point of meeting 11…d5 (other moves transpose) with 12.exd5, e.g. 12…♕xd5 (12…♗xd5?!N 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 ♕d6 15.♖e2 ♕g3 16.♕f1 ♖ae8 17.d4 ♕d6 18.♗d3 ♖xe2 19.♕xe2 ♖e8 20.♕d1±; 12…♘xd5?N 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5±) 13.♘f1 ♖ad8 14.♘g3 ♖fe8 15.♕e2 ♕d7 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.fxe3! ♘d5 18.d4 exd4 19.exd4± ♗f5? 20.♘e5± Radjabov-Naiditsch, Istanbul ol 2012.

11…d5

Here we suggest capturing and starting a power play on the light squares beginning with exd5 and then ♘1h2.

12.exd5

As usual 12.♕e2 is the principal alternative, e.g. 12…dxe4 (for 12…♖e8 13.♘g3 ♕d7 14.♗c2 see Areschenko-Aleksandrov in the Strategy chapter) 13.dxe4 ♗xb3 14.axb3 ♕d6 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.♘xe3 ♕e6 17.♕c4 ♕xc4 18.♘xc4 ♘d7 19.b4 ♖fe8 20.♘fd2 ♘f8 21.♘b3 ♘e6 22.g3 f6 23.♔g2 ♔f8 24.h4± Vajda-Lombaers, Hilversum 2015.

12…♘xd5

13.♘1h2

A) A very concrete move. Now the pawn on e5 is hanging. The alternative is **13.♘g3 ♖e8**, which transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.2.2. Alternatively:

A1) 13…♕f6?N 14.d4 exd4 15.♘h5 ♕d8 16.♗xh6 (16.♕d3!?) 16…gxh6 17.♕d2 ♘e3 18.cxd4 ♗xb3 19.♖xe3 ♘xd4 20.♘xd4 ♗xd4 21.♖xb3 ♕d6 22.♘g3 f5 23.♖d1 ♖ad8 24.♖d3 c5 25.♘e2±;

A2) **13…♕d6 14.♕e2 ♖ae8** 14…♖fe8N 15.♗a4 (15.♘h4 ♘f4 16.♗xf4 exf4 17.♘e4 ♕d8 18.♕h5 ♗xb3 19.axb3 ♕xd3 20.♘f6+ gxf6 21.♘f5 ♘e5 22.♘xh6+ ♔g7 23.♘f5+=) is very tricky due to the option …♘f4 and should be met by 15…b5 16.♗c2 ♖ad8 17.♕e4 (17.♗d2 ♕d7 18.d4 exd4 19.♕e4 ♘f6 20.♕h4 d3 21.♗xh6=) 17…♘f6 18.♕h4 ♗d7 19.♗d2±.

analysis diagram

15.♗d2N 15.♘h4? ♘f4 (Furhoff-Lindberg, Stockholm ch-SWE 2007) and 15.♘e4?! ♕d8 16.♘g3? ♘f4 (Moehn-Ulanowski, Novy Bor 2010) should be avoided. **15…♘f4 16.♗xf4 exf4 17.♘e4 ♕d8 18.d4 ♗f5 19.♘fd2 ♘a5 20.♗c2±**

B) In this case also **13.♘xe5** is possible due to **13…♘xe5** 13…♗xf2+N 14.♔xf2 ♘xe5 15.♔g1±. **14.♖xe5 ♗xf2+ 15.♔h1 ♗h4 16.♕f3 c6 17.d4** and in Lagarde-Mons, Maribor jr 2012, White's centre gave him a very slight advantage. There are also some low-level correspondence games in which White obtained good attacking chances on the kingside. So 13.♘xe5 comes strongly into consideration.

13…♕d6

13…♕f6? (Jackova-Sammalvuo, Dresden ol W 2008) 14.♘g4N ♗xg4 15.hxg4 ♘f4 16.♗xf4 ♕xf4 17.♖e4 ♕f6 18.♕e2 ♗c5 19.♖e1 ♗d6 20.g5 hxg5 21.♖g4±.

14.♘g4 ♗xg4

14…f6 15.d4! ♖ad8 16.♕e2 ♗xg4 17.hxg4 ♔h8 18.g5 fxg5 19.♘xe5 ♘xe5 20.♕xe5±

Sigurdarson-Mamonovas, ICCF email 2013.

15.hxg4 ♘f6

15...♖ad8 16.g5 h5 17.♕e2±: see Almasi-Kortchnoi, Paks 2005, in the Strategy chapter.

16.♘h4 ♖ad8

16...♖fd8 (Rasmussen-Istomin, ICCF email 2009) 17.♗c2!?N ♕d7 18.g5 ♕g4 19.♕xg4 ♘xg4 20.♖e2 hxg5 21.♗xg5 f6 (21...♖d5 22.♘f5±) 22.♗d2±.

17.d4

This direct try seems to peter out to a drawn position, as several correspondence games have shown. Also here **17.♗c2!?N** might be worth trying, but more tests are needed as this territory is murky, e.g.:

analysis diagram

A) **17...♕e6 18.♘f5 h5 19.d4 ♘xg4 20.♗g5 g6 21.♘h6+** 21.♕f3!?. **21...♘xh6 22.♗xh6 ♕f6** 22...♖fe8 23.♕f3 ♖d6 24.♗f4 ♕f6 25.♖e4±. **23.♗xf8 ♔xf8 24.♗e4 exd4 25.♕f3 ♕xf3** 25...♖d6 26.♕xf6 ♖xf6 27.♖e2±. **26.♗xf3 dxc3 27.bxc3 ♖d2 28.♖e2±**;

B) **17...♕d7 18.g5 ♘g4 19.♖f1 h5** 19...hxg5 20.♗xg5 f6 21.♗b3+ ♔h7 22.d4±. **20.♕e2 g6 21.♕e4** 21.♔h1!?. **21...♕d6** 21...♕d5 22.♕xd5 ♖xd5 23.♗d2 ♘d8 24.♘f3 ♘e6 25.♖ae1 ♖fd8 26.♗c1 ♔g7 27.g3 ♘c5 28.d4 exd4 29.♘xd4±. **22.♗d2 ♕c5 23.♘xg6 ♘xf2 24.♕f5 e4 25.♕xc5 ♗xc5 26.d4 ♘xd4 27.cxd4 fxg6 28.♗b3+ ♔h7 29.♗e3 ♘g4 30.dxc5 ♘xe3 31.♖xf8 ♖xf8 32.♖e1 ♘f5 33.♖xe4 a5 34.c6 bxc6 35.♖e6 ♖b8 36.♖xc6 ♖b7 37.♖c5±**;

C) **17...♖fe8 18.g5 hxg5 19.♗xg5 e4 20.d4 ♘xd4 21.cxd4 ♗xd4 22.♕e2** 22.♗e3!?. **22...♕e5 23.♗xf6 ♕xf6 24.g3 e3 25.f4 ♗xb2 26.♖ab1 ♗c3 27.♖ed1±**

17...♘h7

17...exd4N 18.♘f5 ♕c5 18...♕d7 19.♗xh6 dxc3 (19...gxh6 20.♕c1 ♘xg4 21.♕f4±) 20.♕xd7 ♖xd7 21.♗xg7 cxb2 22.♖ab1 ♘xg4 23.♖e4 ♘ce5 (23...♘xf2? 24.♖h4+–) 24.♗xe5 ♘xe5 25.♖xe5±. **19.♕f3 dxc3 20.♗e3 ♘d4 21.♗xd4 ♖xd4 22.♘xd4 cxb2 23.♖ad1 b1♕ 24.♖xb1 ♕xd4 25.♖bd1±**

18.♘f5 ♕f6 19.d5 ♘e7 20.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 21.♕f3 ♖fe8 22.♗f4 e4

22...♘g5 (Janos-Birkbeck, ICCF email 2011 23.♕e2N ♕f6 24.♗e3±).

23.♕g3 ♖d7

23...♘f6N 24.♗xc7 e3 25.fxe3 ♖d7 26.d6 ♕e4 27.♕f3 ♘xg4 (27...♕e5 28.g3±) 28.♕xe4 ♖xe4 29.♗d5 ♖xe3 30.♖xe3 ♘xe3 31.♗xb7 ♘f5+ 32.♔f1 ♘xd6 33.♗xd6 ♖xb7 34.b4 ±.

24.c4 c6 25.♖ad1 ♘f6 26.♗d2 ♗b8 27.♕h4 ♗a7 28.♕g3 ♗b8 29.♕h3 ♗a7 30.♕g3 ♗b8

½-½

Achilles-Nordal, ICCF email 2013.

The line with 13.♘1h2 is interesting, but White needs to try something new like 17.♗c2!?, otherwise it seems like a direct way to draw the game.
Very interesting is 13.♘xe5 against this move order. White seems to have the better chances. Of course you can limit your repertoire and choose 13.♘g3, which should lead to the next chapter.

8.2.2.2.2 – 12…d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5

The advance 12…d5 is considered the main line of the Slow Italian. White can meet it basically in two different ways, and we have divided the chapter accordingly.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♘bd2 h6 9.♖e1 0-0 10.♘f1 ♗e6 11.♘g3 ♖e8

11…d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.h3 transposes.

12.h3

A) **12.♗xe6!?** is an alternative that was even chosen by Magnus Carlsen in a rapid game, and it does not score badly, e.g. **12…♖xe6**:

A1) 13.h3 d5 14.♕e2 ♕d7 15.♘h4 ♖d8 16.♘hf5 dxe4 17.dxe4 ♕d3 18.♔f1 ♖ee8 19.♕xd3 ♖xd3 20.♔e2 ♖ed8 21.f3 a5 22.a4 ♖3d7 23.♘e3 ♘e8 24.♘gf5 ♘d6 25.♘xd6 ♖xd6 26.♘c4 ♖d3 27.♗d2± Anand-Hammer, Kristiansund 2010. A typical scenario here is for White to exchange the rooks and play with the slightly better minor pieces;

A2) **13.d4 d5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♘xe4** 15…♖xe5?! 16.♗f4 ♖e6 17.e5 ♘h7 18.♘f5 ♘f8 (Kudrin-Gustafsson, New York 2011) 19.♕f3!?N c6 (19…♕d7 20.♖ad1 c6 21.c4 d4 22.♖e4 c5 23.h4 ♘g6 24.♕g4±) 20.h4 ♘g6 21.♗g3±. **16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♗f4 ♕d3** was level in Radjabov-Karjakin, Shamkir 2014;

B) 12.♗c2 is also possible as 12…♘g4?!N can be met by 13.d4.

12…d5

Finally, the advance of the d-pawn is the main move in the position. We suggest the following for White:

13.exd5

For **13.♕e2 ♕d7 14.♗c2** 14.♗d2 ♖ad8 15.♖ad1 is another option: 15…dxe4 (15…♗xh3? (Socko-Azarov, Katowice tt rapid 2016) 16.gxh3 ♕xh3 17.♗e3 ♗xe3 18.♕xe3±) 16.dxe4 ♗xb3 17.axb3 ♕d3 18.♕xd3 ♖xd3 19.♗c1 ♖ed8 20.♖xd3 ♖xd3 21.b4 ♘e8 22.♔f1= Spooner-Leisner, ICCF email 2010. **14…♖ad8 15.♔h2**, which is played most often; see Areschenko-Aleksandrov, Moscow 2007 in the Strategy chapter.

13…♘xd5!?

This recapture is played less often, but is not particularly easy for White to deal with.

14.♗c2

This position arises very often by transposition when White plays ♗c2 earlier. We want to mention two alternatives:

A) **14.♘h5** is played often in correspondence games, but it seems to peter out to a draw:

A1) **14...♘f6?! 15.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.♖xe3 ♖ad8 18.♕c2 ♕g6** 18...♗d5 19.♖ae1 ♖e6 20.♗xd5 ♖xd5 21.b4 ♕f5 22.♕e2 b5 23.♘d2± Cretu-Bucsa, ICCF email 2008. **19.♖ae1 b6** (Lopez-Soszynski, FICGS email 2011) 19...♗xb3N 20.♕xb3 b5 21.d4 ♘a5 (21...e4? 22.♘d2 ♘a5 23.♕a3 ♘c4 24.♘xc4 bxc4 25.♕c5±) 22.♕b4 ♘c4 23.♖e4±. **20.♕e2N ♗xb3 21.axb3 ♖e6 22.b4 ♖ed6 23.♘h4 ♕f6 24.g3±**;

A2) 14...g6? 15.♘g3 ♔g7 16.♕d2 ♘f4 17.♘xe5+– Krause-Rogozenco, Bargteheide 2016;

A3) **14...♕d6!** seems to equalise completely, e.g. **15.♗xd5** 15.♕d2 ♘f4 16.♘xf4 ♗xb3 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.axb3 and draw agreed in Wedel-Haller, ICCF email 2014. **15...♗xd5 16.♘h4 ♗e6 17.♕f3 ♔h7 18.♕e4+ ♔h8 19.♗xh6 gxh6 20.♘f6 ♔g7** and draw agreed in Roos-Rybak, ICCF email 2007, in view of **21.♘h5+ ♔g8 22.♘f6+ ♔g7 23.♘h5+ ♔g8 24.♘f6+ ♔g7=**

B) **14.♗d2!?** might be interesting. The position is very delicate. Black can hold, but his task is more difficult than White's and more practical tests are needed:

analysis diagram

B1) 14...♘f6 (Lannoy-Herzog, LSS email 2013) 15.♗c2N ♕d5 16.♕e2±;

B2) 14...♕f6? (Nevednichy-Kosten, Montpellier 2003) 15.d4!N exd4 16.♘h5 ♕g6 17.♘h4 ♕h7 18.♖xe6 fxe6 19.♕g4 ♘e5 20.♕g3+–;

B3) **14...♕d6** (Martinovic-Scekic, Yugoslavia tt 1994) **15.♘h4N**

B31) **15...♘de7 16.♗c2 ♖f8** 16...f5? 17.d4 e4 18.♕c1 ♔f7 19.♗d1 ♖h8 20.♗h5+ ♔g8 21.♗f4±; 16...♖ad8? 17.♗xh6±. **17.♘e4 ♕d7 18.♗xh6 f5 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♕h5 fxe4 21.♕g5+ ♔f7 22.♕h5+=**;

B32) 15...♖ad8 16.♕f3 ♘f6 17.♗c2 ♗d5 18.♘hf5 ♗xf3 19.♘xd6 ♖xd6 20.gxf3=;

B33) **15...♘f6 16.♗c2** 16.♕f3!?. **16...♖ad8** 16...♘e7 17.♕e2±. **17.♕f3 ♗d5 18.♘hf5 ♗xf3 19.♘xd6 ♖xd6 20.gxf3=**

14...♕d6

14...♕e7 was played in Nun-Linster, Pardubice 2012. It prevents the knight jump to h4, but it doesn't make much sense to put the queen on the same file as the white rook. 15.♗d2N ♖ad8 16.b4± is a good way to proceed for White.

15.♘h4

15...♖ad8

A) 15...♕d8 (Harikrishna-Sethuraman, Baku 2015) 16.♕h5!?N ♗c5 17.♘hf5 ♗f8 18.♕f3⩲;

B) 15...♕d7 16.♕f3 ♕e7? 17.♘hf5 ♕f8 (Giri-So, Bilbao blitz 2015)

analysis diagram

and now the typical lever 18.d4!N starts a very dangerous attack, e.g.: 18...exd4 19.♗xh6 gxh6 20.♕h5 ♗xf5 21.♘xf5 ♘ce7 22.♘xh6+ ♔g7 23.♖e4 ♘g6 24.♘f5+ ♔g8 25.♖g4 d3 26.♗xd3 ♖e6 27.♘h6+ ♔g7 28.♗xg6 ♖xg6 29.♘f5+ ♔f6 30.♘h4 ♖xg4 31.♕f5+ ♔e7 32.♕e5+ ♔d7 33.♕xd5+ ♔c8 34.hxg4+–;

C) **15...♕e7** now makes more sense as it comes with tempo. **16.♕h5**:

C1) **16...♘f4?! 17.♗xf4 exf4 18.♘e4 ♖ad8 19.♘f5! ♗xf5 20.♕xf5 ♕e5 21.♕g4! ♔f8** 21...f5? 22.♕g6+–; 21...♘e7N 22.d4 ♕f5 23.♕xf5 ♘xf5 24.♘f6+ gxf6 25.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26.♗xf5⩲. **22.♕f3 g5 23.d4 ♕g7 24.♘d2⩲** Onischuk-Efimenko, Baku 2014;

C2) **16...♖ad8!N 17.d4 ♘f4 18.♗xf4 exf4 19.♘f1** 19.♘gf5 ♕f6 20.♘f3 g6 21.♕xh6 ♗xf5 22.♗xf5 ♕xf5 23.♘g5 ♕f6 24.♕h7+ ♔f8 25.♕h4 ♔g7 26.♕h7+ ♔f8 27.♕h4=. **19...♖d5 20.♕xd5 ♗xd5 21.♖xe7 ♖xe7 22.♘d2** with the idea of exchanging the bishop should lead to a slightly better endgame;

C3) 16...♘f6 17.♕f3 ♗d5 18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.dxe4 ♗e6 20.♘f5⩲ Bok-Krivonosov, Riga 2014.

16.♕f3!?

16.♘hf5 ♗xf5 17.♘xf5 ♕f6 (Andriasyan-Inarkiev, Jerusalem Ech 2015) 18.♕g4!?N ♘ce7 19.♘xe7+ (19.♘xh6+ is a sneaky try, but probably not enough for White, e.g. 19...♔f8 20.♗g5 ♕xf2+ 21.♔h1 ♕xc2 22.♖f1 ♗f2 23.♖ad1 ♘f6 24.♗xf6 gxf6 25.♕h5 ♔g7 26.♘xf7 ♖xd3 27.♘xe5 fxe5 28.♕xe5+ ♔g8 29.♕e6+ ♔g7 30.♕e5+=) 19...♖xe7 20.♖e2 ♖de8 21.♗b3 c6 22.♗d2 ♘f4 23.♗xf4 ♕xf4 24.♕xf4 exf4 25.♖xe7 ♖xe7

26.♔f1 and White's advantage is only symbolic.

16...♕f8

(Predojevic-Hess, Moscow 2011) 16...♘ce7N 17.♗d2 ♔h8 18.♖ad1±.

17.♘hf5!?N ♘de7 18.♕h5 f6 19.d4±

With good attacking chances for White. If Black takes back on d5 with the knight, a curious constellation arises. Is White's pawn on d3 weaker than Black's on e5 or the other way around? The position is very difficult to play and knowledge and experience count, so we think that this is good for White as the black players will not have much experience with this delicate structure.

8.2.2.2.3 – 12...d5 13.exd5 ♗xd5

After analysing 13...♘xd5 we are going to take a brief look at what happens after 13...♗xd5.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 h6 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♘f1 ♗e6 12.♘g3 d5 13.exd5 ♗xd5 14.♗c2

Now we will take a look at some minor options except for 14...♕d7, which leads to the next chapter.

14...♗c5

The typical bishop transfer to protect the kingside.

A) **14...♘d7 15.b4 ♘f8 16.a4 b5** This move weakens the square c5. After the exchange of the dark-squared bishops White can place a knight on c5. **17.♗e3 ♗xe3 18.♖xe3** 18.fxe3N ♘g6 19.♖f1±. **18...♘g6 19.♕e1 ♘f4 20.♘e2 ♘g6 21.♘g3 ♘f4 22.♔h2 ♖e6** (Ganguly-Inarkiev, Berlin Wch rapid 2015) **23.♘e4N ♖e8 24.♘c5±**;

B) The main move 14...♕d7 transposes to Chapter 8.2.2.2.4;

C) **14...b5 15.♗e3** 15.♘h4!?N. **15...♕b8 16.♘h4 ♗e6?!** (Mainka-Chkhaidze, Bad Wörishofen 2015) **17.♗xh6!N gxh6 18.d4!** probably gives White a devastating attack, e.g. **18...♗d5 19.♘hf5 ♖e6 20.♘xh6+ ♔f8 21.♕c1 ♕b6 22.♘gf5 exd4 23.♖xe6 d3 24.♖e3 dxc2 25.♕xc2±**;

D) 14...♗xf3?! 15.♕xf3 ♕d5 16.♘e4 ♘xe4 17.♖xe4 ♕e6? (Tate-Ricci, Arvier 2010) 18.♗b3N ♕e7 19.d4±;

E) **14...♕d6!?** (Bologan-Efimenko, Serbia tt 2009) **15.♗d2N** 15.b4?!N e4! 16.dxe4 ♕xg3!. **15...♖ad8 16.b4** White has typical play on the queenside and preserves his options to regroup his knights on the kingside.

15.b4

For 15.♗e3 see Saric-Raznikov in the Strategy chapter.

15...♗f8 16.a4

16...g6

This was Viswanathan Anand's choice against Vladimir Kramnik at the Tal Memorial 2016. It's a sort of a waiting move, but one which also weakens the kingside. In previous games Black opted immediately for **16...b5**, e.g. **17.♗e3 ♕c8!?** (Predojevic-Sargissian, Berlin 2007) 17...♖b8 (Petrosian-Melkumyan, Martuni 2011) 18.♘e4N with a slight advantage for White is similar to Kramnik-Anand. **18.♘d2!?N ♗e6** 18...♕b7 19.♘ge4 ♘xe4 20.♘xe4 ♖ad8 21.♕g4, with the initiative. **19.♘de4 ♘d5 20.♗b3 ♘xe3 21.fxe3 ♗xb3 22.♕xb3 ♖b8 23.♖f1** with a slight initiative for White.

17.♗b2!

Now 18.b5 is a positional threat.

17...b5 18.♘e4 ♖b8 19.♗c1!

The bishop has done its duty and returns to a better diagonal.

19...♘d7 20.♗b3!

A typical manoeuvre to exchange the strong bishop on d5.

20...♗xb3 21.♕xb3 ♖e6!

Prophylactic thinking by Anand. 21...♘f6 immediately leads to 22.axb5 axb5 23.♖a6 ♘xe4 24.♖xc6 ♘f6 25.d4 and White has the initiative.

22.axb5 axb5 23.♗e3

A good square for this bishop, as it operates in two directions.

23...♘f6

Black tries to decrease the pressure by exchanging pieces.

24.♖ad1 ♘xe4 25.dxe4 ♕e8 26.♖d5 ♘d8 27.♖a1 ♘b7 28.♖a7

Kramnik-Anand, Moscow 2016.

White still has annoying pressure, as his pieces are more active. Kramnik went on to win a fine positional game. The bishop transfer from a7 to f8 is a little slow and gives White the opportunity to seize the initiative on the queenside. The resulting positions seem to favour the first player, and moreover they are quite easy to handle.

8.2.2.2.4 – Black plays 13...d5

When Black has made all other useful moves this is the main option. We suggest taking on d5 and then playing on both wings and also in the centre against the e5-pawn. Black's slight space advantage in the centre is compensated by White's options on the wings and the position is somewhat easier to play for White as it is more flexible. Very often this chapter is reached via the move order 12...d5 13.exd5 ♗xd5 14.♗c2 ♕d7.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♘bd2 a6 7.♗b3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗a7 9.h3 h6 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♘f1 ♗e6 12.♘g3 ♕d7 13.♗c2 d5

14.exd5!?

Again we suggest opening the centre and clarifying matters immediately. The standard 14.♕e2 is also playable of course, e.g. 14...dxe4 (for 14...♖ad8 see Areschenko-Aleksandrov, Moscow 2007, in the Strategy chapter) 15.dxe4 ♖ad8 16.♔h2 (16.b4N comes strongly into consideration, as White can answer 16...b5 with 17.♖d1 ♕c8 18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 19.a4 ♗c4 20.♕e1±) 16...b5 17.♘h4 ♘e7 18.a4 ♗b6 19.♖d1 ♕c6 20.axb5 axb5 21.♕f3 ♖xd1 22.♗xd1= Brandenburg-Bottema, Vlissingen 2010.

14...♗xd5

A) The main move 14...♘xd5?N 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.♖xe5 c5 17.♕f3 ♖ad8 18.♗d2 ♗b8 19.♖e2 does not give Black enough compensation;

B) **14...♕xd5N** doesn't make much sense as Black should recapture in one move with the queen and not play ...♕d7 first. **15.b4** Now the engines suggest going back with the queen, e.g. **15...♕d7** 15...b5 16.a4 with the initiative. **16.a4 ♗d5 17.♗d2 b5 18.♘h4 ♖e6?! 19.♗e3 ♗xe3 20.fxe3 ♘e7 21.e4 ♗c6 22.a5 ♖d8 23.♗b3 ♖d6 24.d4±**

15.♗e3

A) **15.♗d2 ♖ad8 16.b4 ♕c8?!** 16...♖e6!?N; 16...b5 17.♘h4?! (17.a4!?N) 17...♗c4! 18.♗xh6 ♗xd3 19.♗g5 ♗xc2 20.♕xc2 ♕d3 21.♕xd3 ♖xd3 22.♗xf6 ♖xg3 23.♘f5 ♖g6 24.♗h4 ♖ge6= Bulmaga-Maiorov, Avoine 2015. **17.a4 b5 18.♕e2 ♕b7 19.♘h4 ♖e6 20.♘hf5 ♘e7?!** (Bologan-Krnan, Berlin Wch blitz 2015) **21.♘xe7+N ♖xe7 22.axb5 ♗xg2 23.bxa6 ♕a8 24.♔h2 ♗f3 25.♕f1 e4 26.d4 ♕c8 27.♖a5±**;

B) **15.b4!?** is an interesting alternative:

B1) **15...b5N 16.a4 ♖ad8 17.♗e3 ♗b6 18.♘e4 ♘h5 19.♘h4 ♗xe3 20.♕xh5 ♗f4** 20...♗b6? 21.♘f6+ gxf6 22.d4 e4 23.♕xh6 ♕d6 24.♘f5 ♕f8 25.♕h4 ♘e7 26.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 27.♖e3 ♕d6 28.♕h6+–. **21.♘c5 ♕c8 22.♖ad1±**;

B2) **15...♖e6 16.a4** 16.♘h4!?N b5 17.a4 ♘e7 18.♗e3 ♗xe3 19.fxe3±. **16...♕e8 17.♗e3**

17.♘d2!?N ♘e7 18.c4 ♗c6 19.♗b2 ♘g6 20.b5 ♗d7 21.♘b3±. **17...♗xe3 18.♖xe3±** Kryvoruchko-Goganov, Jerusalem Ech 2015;

B3) **15...♖ad8 16.a4** 16.♗d2 transposes to 15.♗d2. **16...b5**:

B31) **17.axb5 axb5** was played in Nisipeanu-Mamedyarov, Reykjavik Ech tt 2015, and now instead of 18.♘h4 we suggest **18.♖xa7N**, but objectively it should only lead to balanced play, e.g.

analysis diagram

B311) **18...♘xa7 19.♘xe5 ♕e6** 19...♕c8 20.♗xh6 gxh6 21.d4 ♘c6 22.♕c1∞. **20.♗d2 ♘d7 21.d4 ♘xe5 22.♖xe5 ♕c6 23.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24.♕g4 ♗xg2 25.♘f5 g6 26.♘xh6+ ♔f8 27.♘xf7 ♔xf7 28.♕xg2 ♕xg2+ 29.♔xg2=**;

B312) **18...♗xf3 19.♕xf3 ♘xa7 20.♗e3 ♘c6 21.♘f5 ♘e7** 21...♔h7? 22.♘xg7 ♔xg7 23.♗xh6+ ♔g6 24.♗c1 ♔g7 25.♕g3+ ♔f8 26.♗h6+ ♔e7 27.d4 is dangerous for Black. **22.♘xh6+ gxh6 23.♕xf6 ♕d6 24.♕f3 ♘d5 25.♗b3 c6 26.♗c5 ♕g6 27.c4 ♘f4 28.d4 ♕f5 29.cxb5 cxb5 30.♖xe5 ♖xe5 31.dxe5 ♕xe5 32.h4** is equal;

B313) 17.♗d2!?N comes strongly into consideration with a possible transposition to 15.♗d2.

B32) 17.♗e3N ♗xe3 18.♖xe3 ♗xf3 19.♖xf3 ♘e7 20.♘e4 ♘xe4 21.dxe4 ♕xd1+ 22.♗xd1±.

C) For 15.♘h4 see Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter.

15...♗xe3

15...♗b6N 16.♗a4!? (16.♗xb6N should be better for White too) 16...♗xe3 17.♖xe3 b5 18.♗c2 ♕d6 19.♘e4 ♗xe4 20.dxe4 ♕xd1+ 21.♖xd1 ♘a5 22.b3±.

16.♖xe3

16...♖ad8

A) **16…♖e7 17.♘h4** and White has a dangerous initiative on the kingside, as the following examples show:

A1) **17…♗e6 18.♘h5** 18.♖f3N seems even stronger. **18…♘xh5 19.♕xh5 ♕d6 20.♖g3 ♔f8?** 20…♔h8N 21.♖e1± is the lesser evil. **21.♖e1 ♗d7 22.♖ee3 e4 23.dxe4 ♕d2 24.♗b3 ♕xb2 25.♖ef3 ♘e5 26.♘g6+ ♘xg6 27.♕xg6 1-0** Hamdouchi-Van Hoolandt, Nice 2002;

A2) **17…g6 18.c4 ♗e6 19.♗a4!**

analysis diagram

A21) **19…♕d6?! 20.♗xc6 bxc6 21.♘f3 ♗d7 22.♕e2** 22.♕c2!?N c5 23.♖ae1 ♖ae8 24.♕c3± and White wins the e5-pawn. **22…♖ae8 23.♖e1±** Degraeve-Van Dongen, Saint Affrique 2013;

A22) **19…♖b8?! 20.♗xc6 bxc6 21.b3** 21.♘f3!N △ ♖xb2?! 22.♘xe5 ♕d6 23.♕c1 ♖b8 24.c5 ♕d5 25.♕c3+–. **21…♕d6 22.♘f3 ♘d7** 22…♗d7N 23.♕d2 c5 24.♖ae1 ♖be8 25.♕c3±. **23.d4! exd4** (Felgaer-Matsuura, Sao Paulo 2005) **24.♘e4!N ♕f4 25.g3 ♕f5 26.♘xd4 ♕xh3 27.♘xc6** and White has a winning advantage;

A23) **19…b5 20.♕f3 ♘g4?** 20…♔g7N is the lesser evil, but White's advantage is not in doubt after 21.cxb5 axb5 22.♗xb5 ♗d5 23.♕e2. **21.hxg4 ♗xg4 22.♕d5 bxa4 23.♘xg6 ♖ee8**, and now instead of 24.♖ae1?!, after which White later won anyway in Degraeve-Arnaudov, La Fère 2012, **24.♘h5!N** is called for, winning directly due to **24…♕xd5 25.♘f6+ ♔g7 26.♘xe8+ ♖xe8 27.cxd5+–**

B) For 16…♘h7?! see Wei Yi-Klein, in the Strategy chapter;

C) **16…g6 17.♕e2** 17.♕d2N with a view to h6 and 17.b4N make also sense here. **17…♕d6** (Kaidanov-Khachiyan, St Louis ch-USA 2013) 17…♗xf3 18.♕xf3 ♔g7 19.a4 ♖ad8 20.♖ee1 ♖e6 21.a5 ♖d6 22.b4± Nestorovic-Abramovic, Pozarevac 2013. **18.b4N ♔g7 19.a4±**

17.♕e2 ♗xf3

17…♕e6 (Berg-Zude, Copenhagen 2007) 18.d4N ♗c4 19.♕d2 ♗xa2 20.♗d3 ♗b3 (20…♕d5 21.♘xe5 ♘xe5 22.dxe5 ♘d7 23.♕e2 ♘xe5 24.f4 ♕xd3 25.♖xd3 ♘xd3 26.♕f3 ♗c4 27.♕xb7±) 21.♘xe5 ♘xe5 22.♖xe5 ♕d7 23.♖ae1±.

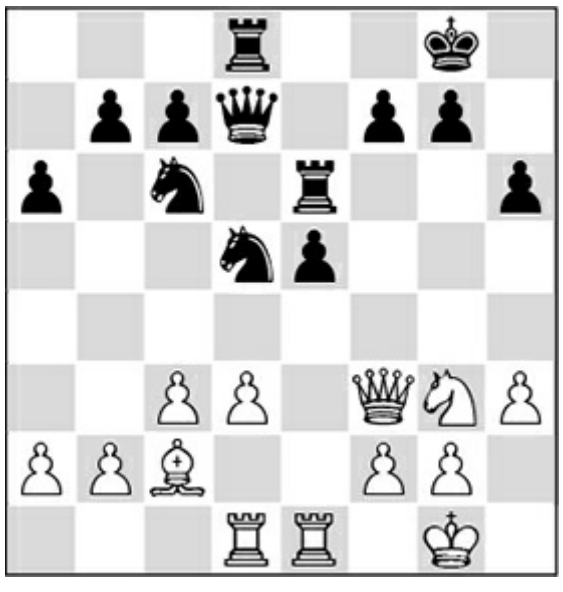
18.♕xf3 ♘d5

(Bryant-Korba, Woodland Hills 2012)

19.♖ee1!? ♖e6

19…♘f4 (Kadric-Blazeka, Budva jr 2013) 20.♘e4 b6 (20…♘xd3? 21.♖ed1+–) 21.♖ad1±.

20.♖ad1



Emms ends here ‘with a roughly level position’, but we prefer White as the bishop has long-term potential, e.g.

20...♖f6

20...♘db4 21.♗b3 ♖f6 22.♕h5 ♘d5 23.♕g4 ♕xg4 24.hxg4 ♖g6 25.f3±.

20...b6 (Degraeve-Votava, Germany Bundesliga 2009/10) 21.♘f5N b5 (21...♖f6?! 22.d4 g6? 23.dxe5+–) 22.a4±.

21.♕e4 ♖e6 22.♗b3±

Conclusion

White again has two options. We mainly recommend taking on d5 and then playing on both wings to create pressure against Black’s centre. Black has more space, but his position is more difficult to play and White has more dynamic options.

Chapter 9
White alternatives

In this chapter we want to refer to some alternative approaches for the white player in comparison to our work. Probably the strongest grandmasters regularly playing the Slow Italian are Sergei Tiviakov and Ivan Saric. In 2015 Tiviakov published the DVD *The Bishop's Opening & The Italian Game* for ChessBase. Here he offers a brief look at his repertoire against 1…e5. In the same year, Ivan Saric published a video series called *A new look at the Italian (Giuoco Piano)* for the website Chess24, based on his own repertoire. We recommend you to take a look at their work, as these exceptional grandmasters explain the Giuoco Piano step by step. There is only one disadvantage. In a DVD, or especially in a video series, it's nearly impossible to go deeply into the secrets of an opening, so the theoretical part gets a raw deal sometimes.

9.1 – Early white move order

9.1.1 – White move order 2.♘f3 or 2.♗c4

White can play 2.♘f3 or 2.♗c4 to reach our starting position. We recommend 2.♘f3, but it depends on which Black defences you want to allow.

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4

The Bishop's Opening, played regularly by Tiviakov, is often used and avoids the Petroff Defence, but Black can use other systems now, especially with …c7-c6. One source is the book *Beating 1.e4 e5* by John Emms, Everyman 2010. 2.♘f3 ♘c6 (by far the main move; 2…♘f6 and 2…d6 are the other serious moves in this position but we do not provide a repertoire against them in this book. If the reader complains we can think about a supplementary book…) 3.♗c4 and our starting position is reached.

2…♘f6

2…♗c5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 and we have reached our repertoire.

2…♘c6 3.♘f3 reaches our repertoire too.

3.d3 ♘c6

The move 3…c6 is the other main line here, which leads out of our repertoire.

4.♘f3

and we have reached our repertoire again.

9.1.2 – Alternatives against 4…♗e7

Tiviakov and Saric differ here and we follow Saric:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.♗b3

This is Tiviakov's pet line and recommendation. He shows for instance the variation

5...0-0 6.c3 d6 7.0-0 ♘a5 8.♗c2 c5 9.d4

which is similar to positions arising in the Ruy Lopez.

Our suggestion, the immediate 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4, is also Saric's favourite. Tiviakov also points out that it is a matter of taste which line you prefer.

9.2 – White postpones 0-0

This is another way to play the Slow Italian, which mostly leads out of our recommended repertoire as we play 0-0 and ♘bd2 early. However, after 5…d6 it can be combined naturally with 6.♗b3 first. In the other cases it makes a significant difference and is a matter of taste. Our recommendation is very systematic and simple, but if you like the Slow Italian and are looking for a fresh approach, postponing 0-0 is definitely an option.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3

Tiviakov likes to postpone castling with the idea of attacking on the kingside. He shows a lot of interesting ideas in his DVD about how to handle this position. Daniel King also recommends such an approach for White in his ChessBase *Power Play 17* DVD and John Emms gives a lot of detail in Part 1 of his book *Beating 1.e4 e5*. Of course we cannot provide full coverage here, so we give only a few lines.

5...0-0

A) After 5…d6, 6.♗b3 comes strongly into consideration to combine with our repertoire, as now a quick …d6-d5 is less likely.

analysis diagram

6…h6!? (6…0-0?! 7.♗g5! is dangerous, as for example games by Kasparov and Tiviakov have shown. Emms deals with it in detail) 7.♘bd2 and White can transpose into our

recommendation or play with the king in the centre at least for the moment. Black has already played …h7-h6, when our recommended repertoire has slightly more bite. One other interpretation by the way is 7.0-0 a6 8.♗e3, but this has more bite after …♗a7;

B) 5…a6 6.♗b3 d6 (6…0-0?! 7.♗g5!; 6…♗a7 7.h3 (7.0-0 d6 8.♗e3!? – this bishop move is one of Tiviakov's specialities, and is also dealt with in depth by Emms) 7…d6 (7…0-0?! 8.♗g5!; 7…d5 8.♕e2) 8.♘bd2 (8.♗e3!?) 8…0-0 9.♘f1 d5 10.♕e2) 7.♕e2!?. This queen move is one of Tiviakov's recommendations.

6.♗b3

With the idea of attacking on the kingside if Black is not careful. For 6.0-0 d5 see Chapter 4.

6.♘bd2 d6 (for 6…d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♘e4 see Chapter 4) 7.♗b3 a6 8.h3 ♗a7 9.♘f1 is another often-used order of moves which postpones 0-0, but the early ♘bd2 makes options with ♗g5 impossible, of course. Emms deals with this position in detail in his book *Beating 1.e4 e5.*

6…d5!

A) 6…a6 7.♗g5!;

B) 6…h6?! gives White an attacking point;

C) 6…d6?! 7.♗g5!.

7.♕e2

Still with the idea of playing ♗g5 or ♘bd2. One way to get a first impression of this set-up is to study Tiviakov's games. White wants to develop kingside play first and decide on the location of his king later. We prefer the clarity of 0-0 in our suggestion.

9.3 – White plays 4.0-0

Here we do not give a complete repertoire, as for example 4…d6 is another main line. Castling early has the advantage that the king's rook can be brought into play more quickly.

9.3.1 – 6.h3

This is recommended by Saric in his video series. White wants to play ♖e1 relatively quickly to discourage the direct …d7-d5 as then the pawn on e5 is slightly weak after 8.♖e1.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0

4.c3 is our move order.

4…♘f6

4…d6 is the other main line, when the frequently played 5.c3 ♘f6 6.d3 leads back into our repertoire and was the chosen move order of Carlsen-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2016. Quite clearly, both sides here have several alternatives, of course.

5.d3 0-0 6.h3

This move order is recommended by Ivan Saric. The idea is not to allow Black to go into the endgame that we analyse in Chapter 4. For 6.c3 d5 see Chapter 4.

6...d5!?

Nonetheless! This is unusual in this position, but surprisingly enough it seems playable. Saric gives the following line (6…d6 should usually lead to our main repertoire, e.g. 7.c3 a6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 9.♖e1 h6 10.♘bd2):

7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♖e1 ♗e6

This seems best. Now White cannot take the pawn on e5. Saric also analyses the move 8… ♖e8 in his video series.

9.♘bd2

9.♘xe5? ♘xe5 10.♖xe5 ♗xf2+ 11.♔xf2 ♕f6+ 12.♔f3 ♕xe5–+ (Saric).

9...f6 10.c3 ♗f7 11.♘e4 ♗b6 12.b4 a6

12…f5? 13.♘eg5 ♘xc3 14.♘xf7 ♗xf2+ 15.♔h1 ♖xf7 16.♕b3 ♗xe1 17.♗xf7+ ♔h8 18.♗b2+– (Saric).

13.a4 ♕d7 14.♕b3

With a typical 'Giuoco Piano' position, says Saric. White is maybe a tiny bit better here, but it's not much, so there is nothing wrong with playing the endgame or the modern trend 8.a4 – we analyse both in Chapter 4.

9.3.2 – 6.♖e1

The idea of this move order is to play ♖e1 early and to keep the ♘b1 flexible. It is important to know how to meet …♘g4 now. In most cases this move order will transpose into our main recommended repertoire, but White has a few extra ideas like an early d3-d4 or taking the knight on the paths ♘b1-a3-c2 or a3-c4-e3.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♖e1 d6

A) 6…d5?! leads by transposition to a rare line we analysed in Chapter 3 after 4…d5?!;

B) The immediate attack **6…♘g4** is rare: **7.♖e2 ♔h8** 7…♘d4!? 8.♘xd4 ♗xd4 9.h3 ♘f6 10.♘d2 d6 11.♘f3 ♗b6 12.♗e3 ♗e6= Brkic-Filippov, Croatia tt 2011. Giri likes this aggressive idea and has tested it with several set-ups. Another example is his game against Sergei Karjakin in our Strategy chapter. **8.h3 f5 9.♘c3** 9.hxg4? fxg4 leads to a dangerous attack for Black and the young Dutch player has analysed it for sure 'until the end'. **9…♘f6 10.♗e3** 10.♗g5N is a logical alternative. **10…♗xe3 11.fxe3 fxe4 12.dxe4 d6**. This position is equal. We give some more moves: **13.a3 ♕e8 14.♕d3 ♘d8 15.♖f2 ♗e6 16.♖af1 a6 17.♘d2 b5 18.♗xe6 ♘xe6 19.♘d5 ♘d7 20.♖xf8+ ♘dxf8=** So-Giri, Bilbao 2016.

7.c3

7...a6

A) It is important to meet **7...♘g4** with **8.♖e2!** as 8.d4? runs into 8...exd4 9.cxd4 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 ♕h4 11.♗e3 ♕xh2+ 12.♔f1 (Atanasov-Sergiev, Bulgaria corr 1988) 12...♕h1+ 13.♔e2 ♕xg2 14.♕b3 d5 15.♗xd5 c6 16.♘d2 ♘xe3 17.♖g1 ♘f5–+. **8...h6 9.♘bd2 ♘f6 10.♘f1 ♗g4 11.♖e1**⩲;

B) After **7...a5** one recent high-level game went: **8.♗g5** 8.♘bd2 is played most often. **8...h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3 ♗a7 11.♘a3 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5 13.♘c2 ♗g6 14.♗h2 ♘h5** (Giri-Eljanov, Stavanger 2016) **15.♘e3!?N** 15.a4!?N. **15...♘f4** 15...♗xe3 16.♖xe3 ♘f4 17.d4 ♖e8 18.♕d2⩲. **16.♘d5 ♘xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗b6 18.a4 ♕f6 19.♕e2 h5 20.♘d2**⩲;

C) 7...♘a5 is met by 8.♗b5 a6 9.♗a4 b5 10.♗c2⩲;

D) 7...♗e6 can be met by 8.♗xe6 fxe6 9.b4 ♗b6 10.♘bd2⩲;

E) 7...♘e7 8.d4 ♗b6 9.h3 ♘g6 10.♗d3 h6 11.♗e3 c6 12.♘bd2⩲ Sethuraman-Sevian, Stockholm 2016.

8.♗b3

8.a4 transposes to Chapter 9.4.2.

8...♗a7

8...♗e6 can as usual be met by 9.♘bd2 or 9.♗c2, when 9...♘g4 should be met by 10.♖f1 as 10.d4? runs into 10...exd4 11.cxd4 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 ♕h4–+.

9.h3 h6

After 9...♗e6, 10.♘bd2 leads in the direction of our recommended repertoire, while 10.♗c2 d5 11.exd5 ♕xd5 12.♗g5 is the alternative, which has scored well for White and is recommended by Emms.

10.♘bd2

and we have transposed.

9.4 – White plays a2-a4 early

This is a modern trend, which opens up new plans for White on the queenside, and for the queen's knight, as it can now also be developed via a3-c2-e3 followed by ♗e3. This plan is also quite easy to remember and even the World Champion has already used it.

9.4.1 – Black plays ...a7-a5

Here White's knight often uses the road via c4 and White also has ♗b5 on several occasions:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 d6 5.c3 ♘f6 6.d3 h6

For 6...0-0 7.a4 a6 see the next game for Black set-ups with ...a7-a6.

Against **6...♗b6** White can also play with **7.a4**, for example: **7...a5 8.♘a3 ♘e7 9.♗b3 c6 10.♘c4 ♗c7 11.♖e1 0-0 12.♗g5 ♘g6**

analysis diagram

13.♘h4! An important motif to preserve the pin. **13...♘xh4 14.♗xh4 h6** 14...♗e6 (Van Kampen-Dvirnyy, Germany Bundesliga 2015/16) 15.♘e3!?±. **15.d4 g5 16.♗g3 ♕e7** (Neiksans-Romanov, Fagernes 2016) **17.♗c2!?N ♗g4 18.f3 ♗e6 19.♘e3 ♘h5 20.♗f2 ♘f4 21.♘f5 ♗xf5 22.exf5±**

7.a4 a5

7...a6 can again be answered by 8.♘a3 – see the next sub-chapter.

8.♘a3 0-0

Magnus Carlsen played 8...♗xa3 in a blitz game during the first leg of the Grand Chess Tour 2016 in Paris against Fabiano Caruana, but in a game with a classical time control Black would probably not exchange his nice bishop. 9.♖xa3 (this rook is temporarily a bit out of play, but that doesn't matter much) 9...0-0 10.♖e1 ♖e8 (Caruana-Carlsen, Paris blitz 2016) and now 11.♕b3N is annoying for Black as he has to cover f7 with one of his major pieces. For example, after 11...♗e6?! 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.♕xb7 d5 14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.♕b3 White has an edge.

9.♘c2 ♖e8 10.♖e1

A useful move before playing ♗e3.

10...♗a7

A) 10...♘e7 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.♘xe3 ♘g6 13.♕b3 ♗e6 14.♗xe6 ♖xe6 15.♘f5 ♖e8 16.♖ad1 ♘e7 17.♘3h4 ♘xf5 18.♘xf5 ♕d7 19.f3 b6 20.d4 with a small plus for White;

B) **10...♗e6 11.♗b5!?** 11.♗xe6 ♖xe6 12.♗e3 (12.d4!?) 12...♗xe3 13.♘xe3 d5 14.♕c2 is also playable, of course. **11...d5** 11...♗b3 12.♗e3 ♗xe3 13.♖xe3 ♖e7 14.♘d2 ♗e6 15.♖g3±. **12.exd5 ♕xd5 13.♗xc6 ♕xc6 14.♘xe5 ♕b6 15.d4 ♗d6 16.♘a3 ♕b3 17.♘b5 ♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♗b3 19.♖f1 ♖ac8 20.♘xd6 cxd6 21.♘f3 g5 22.♗e3 ♘d5 23.♖fe1** is a little better for White.

11.♗e3 ♗e6 12.♗b5 ♗d7 13.♗xa7 ♘xa7 14.♗c4 ♗e6

14...♘c8 15.♘e3 ♘b6 16.♗b3 c6 17.h3 ♗e6 (Caruana-Topalov, Moscow ct 2016) 18.♗xe6N ♖xe6 19.♘f5 gives White a small edge.

15.♗xe6 ♖xe6 16.♘e3 ♘c8 17.♘f5

'The white pieces are a little better placed, but with such a symmetrical structure my slight advantage will naturally disappear. That's why I took the chance to force matters a little' (Carlsen in CBM 171).

17...♘e7 18.d4 exd4 19.♘3xd4

19...♖e5?

19...♖xe4! 20.♖xe4 ♘xe4 21.♕g4 ♘g5! 22.h4 (after 22.♖e1 ♘g6! 23.h4 ♘h7 there is nothing concrete and White is a pawn down) 22...♘xf5 23.♘xf5 ♘e6 24.♘xh6+ ♔f8 25.♘f5 ♕f6= (Carlsen).

20.♘g3 ♘g6 21.♕c2 c6?! 22.♖ad1

This position is more unpleasant for Black than it looks at first sight because Black has no good plans, as ...d6-d5 is difficult to achieve: 'Now I was very surprised and happy to discover that I was actually better! It's hard to play ...d5 under favourable circumstances and my plan in the game is surprisingly powerful' (Carlsen).

22...♕c7 23.♘df5

23.c4!?.

23...♖d8

23...d5 24.exd5 cxd5 25.♖xe5 ♘xe5 26.♘e3 ♕c6 27.♘gf5 ♖e8 28.h3 ♘c4 29.♘xc4 ♕xc4 30.♘e3 ♕c6 31.♖d4 is also very pleasant for White.

24.♕d2

24...♔h7?!

This is too clumsy. 24...♖d7!? offers more resistance, e.g. 25.f4 ♕b6+ 26.♔h1 ♖e8 27.♘xd6 ♘g4 28.♖f1 ♖xd6 29.♕xd6 ♘f2+ 30.♖xf2 ♕xf2 31.f5 ♘e5 32.f6 ♕xf6 33.♕xf6 gxf6 with drawing chances.

25.f4! ♕b6+

25...♖ee8 26.♘xd6 ♕b6+ 27.♕f2±.

26.♔h1 ♖ee8 27.h3 ♖d7

Magnus had calculated 27...h5 28.♕e2! deeply and correctly concluded that White is better as 28...♘xf4? can be met by 29.♕f3±.

28.♘xd6 ♖xd6 29.♕xd6

White is winning, and Carlsen converted after some complications in the endgame. We give the rest of this fascinating game without annotations:

29...♕f2 30.♕d3 ♘xf4 31.♕f3 ♘xh3 32.♖e2 ♕xf3 33.gxf3 ♘g5 34.♔g2 ♘e6 35.♖ed2 g6 36.♘f1 h5 37.♘e3 h4 38.♘c4 g5 39.♘xa5 g4 40.♘xb7 g3 41.♘d6 ♖g8 42.♘f5 ♘f4+ 43.♔h1 h3 44.a5 ♘6h5 45.a6 ♘e6 46.a7 ♖a8 47.♖a1 ♘g5 48.♘h4 ♘f4 49.b4 g2+ 50.♘xg2 hxg2+ 51.♖xg2 ♘xg2 52.♔xg2 ♘e6 53.c4 ♘c7 54.♔g3 ♔g6 55.♔f4 ♔f6 56.e5+ ♔e7 57.♔e4 f6 58.f4 fxe5 59.♔xe5 ♘e8 60.f5 ♘d6 61.f6+ ♔d7 62.♖d1 ♖e8+ 63.♔d4 ♔c7 64.♖e1 ♘f5+ 65.♔c3 ♖a8 66.f7

1-0

Carlsen-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2016.

As …a7-a5 is very committal, Black most often plays …a7-a6, which also scores better. The whole a2-a4 idea is relatively fresh and the theory is still developing.

9.4.2 – Black plays …a7-a6

This is played most often against a2-a4 as it is more flexible than …a7-a5. White usually just follows the main plans and not much concrete knowledge of exact theory is needed to play this plan:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0

As with the main line White can also delay castling here, e.g. 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 ♗b6 (a rare move in this position) 6.a4!? (White usually plays 6.b4, which transposes to the Evans Gambit Declined and can transpose. You can compare it to the game Short-Portisch in the Strategy chapter. Another option is 6.0-0, which is in the spirit of our main recommendation – see Chapter 5.6) 6...d6 7.♗g5!? (it is not so easy to find shelter for Black's king) 7...h6 8.♗h4 a6 9.♘bd2 ♗e6 10.b4 ♘e7 (A.Muzychuk-Zhao Xue, Batumi 2016) 11.♗xf6N gxf6 12.d4 exd4 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.♘xd4 ♕d7 15.0-0±.

4...♘f6 5.d3 0-0

5...d6 6.c3 a6 and now:

A) **7.♖e1** In our main repertoire we play this move very late, but it can of course played earlier if …♘g4 is not dangerous. **7…♗a7 8.a4 ♗e6** 8…0-0 9.♘a3 transposes to the main line. **9.♗xe6 fxe6 10.♕b3 ♕c8 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.♖xe3 0-0 13.♘bd2 ♘a5 14.♕a2 c5 15.d4 c4 16.b4** 16.♖e2!? **16…cxb3 17.♘xb3 ♘c4 18.♖ee1 ♕c6?! 19.♘c5! dxc5 20.♕xc4 exd4 21.cxd4 ♘d7** (So-Caruana, Wijk aan Zee 2016) **22.♘g5N ♖ae8 23.d5 exd5 24.exd5 ♖xe1+ 25.♖xe1 ♕d6 26.♘e4 ♕f4 27.a5±**;

B) **7.a4 ♗a7** For 8.♘a3 see Anand-Aronian, Moscow ct 2016 in the Strategy chapter. **8.♖e1 ♘e7 9.d4** was played by Kramnik. **9…0-0 10.h3** 10.♗g5N ♘g6 11.♘h4 ♗g4 12.f3 ♗d7 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.♗e3 ♖e8 15.♘a3 exd4 16.cxd4 d5=; 10.dxe5N ♘g4=. **10…♘g6 11.♗d3 ♖e8 12.♕c2 ♗d7 13.♗e3 d5 14.♘bd2 exd4 15.cxd4 dxe4 16.♘xe4 ♗c6 17.♗g5 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4 c6** (Kramnik-Aronian, Stavanger 2016), and here instead of 19.♕b3 ♕b6 20.♕xb6 ♗xb6 21.♗xf6 gxf6=, White can improve with **19.♖e3!N** e.g. **19…♘f8 20.♖ae1 ♖e6 21.♗f5 ♖xe3 22.fxe3±** and the bishop pair should count for something.

6.♖e1 d6 7.c3 a6 8.a4 ♗a7

If **8…h6**:

A) **9.♘bd2**

A1) **9…♘e7 10.♘f1 ♘g6 11.♗b3 c6 12.h3 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘xe5 ♗xf2+** 14…♘xe5N 15.d4!±. **15.♔xf2 ♘xe5 16.d4** White gets a nice centre and the bishop pair. Of course not 16.♖xe5?!N ♕f6+ 17.♕f3 ♕xe5∓. **16…♘g6 17.♔g1 ♕h4 18.♗d2 ♗d7 19.♕f3±** (Giri-Wei Yi, Bilbao 2016);

A2) **9…♖e8 10.♘f1 ♗a7 11.♗e3** 11.♘g3 ♗e6 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.b4 d5 14.♕c2 also gave White a bit of an edge in Anand-Wei Yi, Leon rapid 2016. **11…♗e6 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.♗xa7 ♖xa7 14.♘g3 d5** (Kramnik-Svidler Russia tt 2016) and now: **15.♕b3N dxe4** 15…a5 16.♖ad1±. **16.♘xe4 ♘xe4 17.dxe4 ♖d6 18.♖ad1±**

B) **9.h3 ♗e6** 9…♖e8 10.♘a3 ♗xa3 11.♖xa3 ♗e6 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.b4 d5 14.b5 ♘e7 15.♕b3 axb5 16.axb5 ♖xa3 17.♗xa3 ♘g6 18.g3 ♖e8 19.exd5 ♘xd5 (19…♕xd5 20.♕xd5 ♘xd5 21.c4 ♘b6 22.♗b4 f6 23.♖a1±) 20.c4 ♘f6 21.♔g2 ♕d7 22.♗b2 ♕f5 (Ponomariov-Ding Liren, Huai'an Basque 2016) 23.♖e3!?N e4 24.dxe4 ♖xe4 25.♕c2 ♕e6 26.♘d4±. **10.♗xe6 fxe6 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.♖xe3 ♕d7 13.♘bd2 ♕f7 14.g3 ♘d7 15.♔g2** 15.b4!?N (Pavlovic in CBM 171) is probably called for. **15…a5=** Giri-Anand, Zurich 2016.

9.♘a3

White can also use the usual route for the knight transfer: **9.h3**

A) 9…♗e6 10.♗xe6 fxe6 11.♕b3 ♕d7 12.♗e3 ♗xe3 13.♖xe3 ♘h5 14.g3 ♔h8 15.♘bd2 ♘f6 16.d4 exd4 17.cxd4± (Caruana-Nakamura, St Louis blitz 2016);

B) Against **9…♘e7 10.♘bd2 ♘g6**

B1) one recent game went **11.♗b3 ♖e8 12.d4 h6 13.♗c2 c6 14.♘f1 d5 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 dxe4 18.♕xd8 ♖xd8 19.♘g3** 19.♗e3!?N ♗b8 20.♗d4 might be slightly more precise, e.g. 20…a5 21.♘g3 e3 22.♗xe3 ♗c7 23.♘e4 b6 24.♘d6 ♗e6 25.b4 ±. **19…♗b8 20.♗e3 ♗xe5 21.♘xe4 ♗c7 22.a5 ♗f5 23.♘c5 ♖ab8 24.g4 ♗c2 25.♖ac1 ♗g6 26.b4 ♗d6 27.♘a4 f6 28.♗a7 ♖a8 29.♗c5 ♗e5 30.♘b6 ♖ab8 31.♘c4 ♗f4 32.♗e3 ♗xe3 33.♖xe3 b5 34.axb6 ♗f7 ½-½** Anand-Aronian, St Louis 2016;

B2) **11.♘f1 c6 12.♗b3 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘g3N** might be a try, e.g. 14.d4 was strongly met by 14…exd4 15.♘xd4 ♗e6!= (Caruana-So, St Louis blitz 2016). **14…♕c7 15.a5 ♗e6 16.♘g5±**

C) **9…h6 10.♘bd2**:

C1) **10…♖e8**:

C11) **11.♘f1 ♗e6 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♘xe3 d5 15.♕c2 ♕d7**

analysis diagram

C111) 16.♖ad1 ♖d8 17.♘f5 ♕e8 18.b4 b5 19.axb5 axb5 20.♘d2 ♘e7 21.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 22.♘b3 dxe4 23.dxe4 ♖ed6 24.♘c5 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 26.♕xd1 ♕d6 27.♕e2 c6 28.g3 ♘d7 29.♘xd7 ♕xd7 30.♔g2 ♕d6 31.♕e3 ½-½ (M.Muzychuk-Hou Yifan, Lviv Wch W 2016);

C112) In the game White did not get anything. It would have been better to retain the flexibility of the queen's rook with **16.b4!?N ♘e7 17.♖ab1 ♖e8** 17…b5 18.exd5 ♘fxd5 19.♘xd5 ♕xd5 20.c4±; 17…♘g6 18.c4 d4 19.♘f5±. **18.b5 axb5 19.axb5 ♘g6 20.c4 dxe4 21.dxe4 ♘f4 22.♖ed1 ♖d6 23.♔h2**, when White has a small edge.

C12) Playing immediately on the queenside is also possible, e.g. **11.b4 ♗e6 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.♘f1** 13.♕c2 ♕d7 14.♘f1 ♖ee8 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.♘xe3 ♘d8 (J.van Foreest-Tkachiev, Stockholm 2016) 17.♘f5N ♘e6 18.d4±. **13…d5 14.♕c2 dxe4** 14…d4 15.b5 ♘e7 16.cxd4 ♗xd4 17.♘xd4 ♕xd4 18.♗e3 ♕d7 19.♘g3 ♖d8 20.♖ed1 axb5 21.axb5 ♘e8 22.♖ab1 b6 23.d4± (Giri-Caruana, Leuven rapid 2016). **15.dxe4 ♕d7 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.♘xe3 ♘e7 18.c4 ♕c6** (J.van Foreest-Swinkels, Maastricht 2016) **19.♖ac1N ♘g6 20.♘d5±**

C2) **10…♘h5!?** This is similar to the position in Chapter 7.2. There the bishop is placed on b3 and the pawn on a2, but this is not a significant difference. **11.♘f1 ♕f6 12.♘e3** 12.♗e3N with the idea of pushing d2-d4 is our recommendation in Chapter 7.2. **12…♘f4 13.♘g4 ♕g6 14.♗xf4 exf4 15.d4 ♗xg4 16.hxg4 ♕xg4 17.♕d3** White gets compensation due to his strong centre. This idea is well known, but it works better with the bishop on b3 as a possible …d6-d5 comes with tempo when the bishop is still on c4. **17…♘e7 18.♖e2 ♖ad8 19.b4 ♗b8 20.b5 axb5 21.axb5 c6 22.♖b1** 22.bxc6N bxc6 23.♗b3⩲ △ 23…d5?! 24.e5. **22…d5 23.♗a2 dxe4 24.♖xe4 ♗d6=** Giri-So, Bilbao 2016;

C3) **10…♘e7 11.♘f1 ♘g6 12.♘g3 c6 13.♗a2** 13.♗b3 ♗e6 14.d4 is an alternative. **13…♗e6 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.d4 exd4 16.cxd4 d5?! 17.exd5 exd5?! 18.♕d3 ♘e7 19.♗d2 ♗b8 20.♗b4 ♗d6** (Giri-Nakamura, Moscow ct 2016) **21.♕a3!N ♘c8 22.♗c5 ♗xc5 23.dxc5 ♘e7 24.♕d3 ♘d7 25.♘d4 ♖f7 26.♘e6**, with a significant advantage for White.

9…h6 10.♘c2 ♖e8 11.♗e3 ♗e6 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.♗xa7 ♖xa7

14.d4!?

This advance is more principled than the alternative 14.♘e3, which is also playable of course.

14...exd4 15.♘fxd4 ♘xd4

15...♖xe4? runs into 16.♖xe4 ♘xe4 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♕d4 ♘c5 19.b4 ♘b3 20.♕xa7 ♘xa1 21.♘xa1+–.

16.♕xd4 ♖a8 17.f3 a5 18.♘e3 ♕d7 19.♖ed1 b6 20.♕c4

20.♘f5!?.

20...♖ae8 21.♕b5 ♕c8 22.b4 ♕a8 23.♕d3 c6 24.bxa5 bxa5 25.c4 g6

26.♕c3

26.♕d2!? creates more pressure, and Black's task is not easy, e.g. 26...♘d7 27.♘c2 ♔h7 28.♘d4 ♖e5 29.♘b3 ♖8e6 30.♖ab1±.

26...♘d7 27.♘c2 ♘c5 28.♘d4 ♖6e7 29.♖d2 h5 30.♕e3 ♕a6 31.♘f5

So forces the draw.

31...gxf5 32.♕g5+ ♔f8 33.♕h6+ ♔g8 34.♕g5+ ♔f8 35.exf5 ♕xc4 36.♕h6+ ♔g8 37.♕g5+ ♔f8 38.♕h6+

½-½

So-Mamedyarov, Wijk aan Zee 2016.

9.5 – White plays 0-0 and ♗g5

This approach adds more spice to the set-up, but it is also much more risky, of course. White quite often chooses to sacrifice the knight on f3 after ...g7-g5-g4.

This line is still developing and we can give only a short overview here. One recent source is Ufuk Tuncer's article 'The Bishop's Good History' in *New in Chess Yearbook* 120, pp. 116–125, while a major exponent of the line is GM Anton Demchenko.

If White wants to play ♗g5 set-ups exclusively it can make a lot of sense to make do

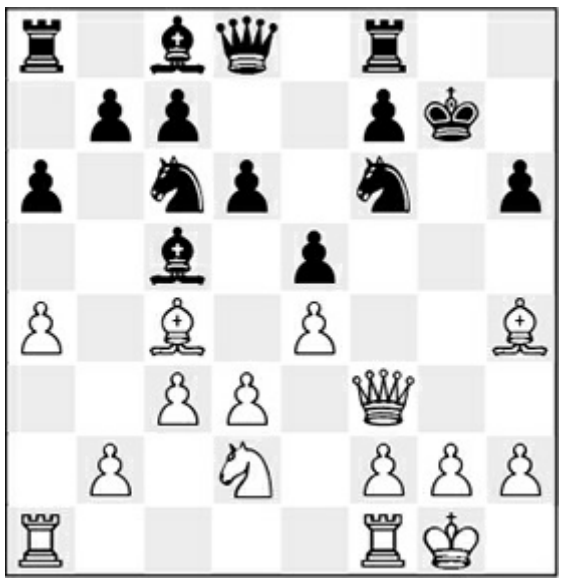
without the early c2-c3, as Tuncer points out. We follow our main move order here nevertheless, and as usual we have changed the move order of the games to fit them into our presentation.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6

5...0-0 6.0-0 d6:

A) **7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4 ♗b6 9.a4 a6 10.♘bd2 ♔h8 11.b4 g5 12.♗g3 ♘h7 13.a5 ♗a7 14.b5 axb5 15.♗xb5 ♘e7 16.d4 exd4** 16...g4N 17.♘h4 exd4 18.♕c2 ♘g5 19.♘b3 dxc3 20.♕xc3+⩲. **17.♘xd4 f5 18.f3 f4 19.♗f2 ♘g6 20.a6⩲** Bauer-Feller, Agen ch-FRA 2016;

B) **7.a4 a6 8.♗g5 h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3 g4 11.♗h4 gxf3 12.♕xf3 ♔g7 13.♘d2**



analysis diagram

B1) **13...♗a7N** might be better, but White just continues as if nothing has been sacrificed, e.g. **14.♖fe1** 14.♔h1 transposes to the main line. Ufuk Tuncer favours 14.♖fd1, which is also very dangerous. **14...♖h8 15.♘f1 h5 16.h3 ♖h6 17.♘g3 ♕e7 18.b4 ♗e6 19.♖ad1** with dangerous compensation;

B2) **13...♖g8?! 14.♖fe1** 14.♖fd1!?N is also interesting, e.g. 14...♕e7 15.♘f1 h5 16.h3 with dangerous compensation. **14...♔g6?! 15.h3 ♗e6** (Schröder-Fressinet, Helsingor 2016) **16.♘f1⩲**

6.0-0 ♗a7 7.♗g5 h6

In the following games Black transfers the other knight to the kingside first, which seems like a decent idea. **7...d6 8.a4** 8.♘bd2 seems more precise and can lead to the main line in the text. **8...h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3 ♘e7** 10...♘h7!?N should be met by 11.b4 (Tuncer).

A) **11.d4 ♘xe4 12.♘xe5 0-0** Taking the piece seems possible as after 12...dxe5N 13.♗xe5 ♖f8 14.♖e1 ♗f5 it's not clear how White should proceed. **13.♘xf7?!** 13.♘g4N d5 14.♗d3 ♗xg4 15.♕xg4 f5∞. **13...♖xf7 14.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 15.f4 g4 16.f5 ♘xg3 17.hxg3 ♘g8 18.♕xg4 ♕g5 19.♕xg5** 19.♕e2N c5 is unclear. **19...hxg5 20.♘d2** (Mamedov-Caruana, Shamkir 2016) **20...c5!N 21.♘e4 cxd4 22.cxd4 ♗xd4+ 23.♔h2 ♘f6∓**;

B) **11.♘bd2 ♘g6 12.d4 ♕e7 13.♖e1** It's not easy to find a good plan for White here. **13...♘h7!** Black is just attacking on the kingside. **14.h3 h5 15.♘f1 g4 16.hxg4 ♗xg4** 16...hxg4N 17.♘3h2 ♕g5 looks nice for Black. **17.♘e3 0-0-0 18.♘xg4?** 18.♘d5N ♕d7 19.♗e2 is unclear. **18...hxg4 19.♘h2 ♘f6 20.♕d3?! ♘h5–+**. White's position is already lost: **21.♗xa6 ♘xg3 22.fxg3 c6 23.♘xg4 exd4 24.cxd4 ♘e5 25.♕d1 ♘xg4 26.♕xg4+ ♔b8 27.♖ad1 ♕f6 0-1** Yudin-Harutyunian, Kazan 2016.

8.♗h4 d6 9.♘bd2 g5

A) **9...♕e7 10.b4** 10.♖e1 g5 11.♗g3 h5 12.h4 g4 13.♘h2 ♗e6 (Yudin-Praggnanandhaa, Voronezh 2016) 14.a4N 0-0-0 15.b4⩲. **10...g5 11.♗g3 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5 13.♖e1 ♗g6 14.a4 ♘h5 15.♗h2 ♘f4 16.a5 ♗h5 17.♕a4 0-0 18.b5 axb5 19.♕xb5 ♘d8 20.♗xf4 gxf4 21.d4**

± Demchenko-Jakovenko, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014;

B) 9…♘a5 (Demchenko-Malakhov, St Petersburg ch-RUS rapid 2015) 10.♗xf6!?N ♕xf6 11.♗xa6 ♗d7 12.♘c4 bxa6 13.♘xa5±.

10.♗g3 0-0

10…♘a5 11.♗d5 0-0 12.b4 c6 13.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 14.bxa5 ♕xa5 15.d4 ♕xc3 (Demchenko-Venkatesh, Chennai 2016) 16.♖c1N is a bit better for White.

11.a4 g4

A) **11…♔g7 12.♖e1 ♗e6 13.b4 g4 14.♘h4 ♘e7?** (Topalov-So, Leuven blitz 2016) After 14…♘h5N (Tuncer) 15.♖a2!? ♕g5 16.♘f1 might be interesting to play on the light squares on the kingside. **15.d4±**;

B) 11…♗e6 12.♖e1 ♕d7 13.b4 ♘e7 14.d4 ♘g6 15.h3 ♗xc4 16.♘xc4 g4 17.♘h4± Cornette-Demuth, Agen ch-FRA 2016;

C) Tuncer mentions that 11…♘h7!?N, to play on the kingside, is very interesting, e.g. 12.h3 h5 13.♔h1 ♔h8 14.♕e2 ♕f6= (Tuncer).

12.♗h4 ♔g7

12…gxf3 13.♕xf3 ♔g7 14.♔h1 transposes, but White might have better moves here.

13.♔h1

A very courageous but typical idea. 13.♘e1N ♘e7 14.g3 ♘g6 15.♘g2 is the alternative.

13…gxf3 14.♕xf3

14…♘b8?

This retreat is too passive. White has compensation in any case, but matters are not clear, e.g. **14…♖g8N**:

A) 15.g4 ♗xg4 16.♗xf6+ ♕xf6 17.♕xg4+ ♔h8 18.♕f3=;

B) **15.♖g1 h5 16.h3 ♕e7 17.♘f1 ♗e6 18.♘e3** 18.♘g3 ♖h8= (Tadic in Chess Informant 128). **18…♗xe3 19.fxe3 ♘b8 20.g4**, with the initiative, is given by Tuncer, but most likely a draw will result after **20…♘bd7 21.gxh5+ ♔h7 22.♖af1 ♖xg1+ 23.♔xg1 ♗xc4 24.dxc4 ♔g7 25.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 26.h6+ ♔xh6 27.♕xf6+ ♕xf6 28.♖xf6+ ♔g7**;

C) **15.♗d5**:

C1) **15…♘b8?! 16.♕e2 ♔h7 17.h3 c6** 17…♘bd7 18.f4. **18.♗xf7 ♖f8 19.♗b3 ♕e8 20.f4 ♘h5 21.f5±** (Tuncer);

C2) **15…♕e7** is not mentioned by Tuncer and might be interesting, e.g. **16.g4** 16.♘c4 ♘b8 17.♘e3 c6 18.♗b3 ♗e6 19.♘f5+ ♗xf5 20.♕xf5 ♘bd7 21.f4 ♗e3 22.fxe5 dxe5 23.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 24.♖f3 ♗g5=. **16…♘xd5 17.♗xe7 ♘dxe7 18.♖g1** with unclear consequences.

D) 15.♖ae1 15…♔g6 16.♕d1 ♕f8 17.f4 with unclear consequences.

15.g4 ♘bd7

15…♗xg4? 16.♖g1+–.

16.♖g1 ♖h8 17.♘f1 ♕e8?!

17...♔f8N 18.♘g3±.

18.g5 ♘g8 19.gxh6+ ♔f8 20.♕g3 ♘gf6 21.♕g7+ ♔e7 22.♖g6 ♖g8 23.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 24.♕xf6+ ♔d7 25.♗xf7

And Black resigned in Demchenko-Howell, Gjakova Ech 2016.

Conclusion

In a way line 9.4 with a2-a4 illustrates the strategy of the Slow Italian well. White has certain basic aims and manoeuvres, but there is no more than a slight advantage.

But if White likes this way of handling the opening, it is a safe way to play without having to learn many concrete details by heart.

Line 9.5 is completely different and more risky.

Chapter 10
Black repertoires

There are many repertoire books and DVDs recommending 1.e4 e5. We will look at a few and compare their suggestions directly with our repertoire. We start with Mihail Marin's *Beating the Open Games*, Quality Chess 2007:

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗c5 5.c3 d6 6.♗b3 h6 7.♘bd2 a6 8.♘f1

Our move order is different, but the game will transpose and Marin had to deal with all the many different white move orders as well, of course.

8...♗a7 9.♘g3 0-0 10.0-0 ♖e8 11.h3 ♗e6 12.♖e1 ♗xb3 13.♕xb3 ♖b8

After 13...♕d7 Marin does not mention our suggestion 14.♗e3. Black's position is very solid, but it is also somewhat passive and after 14...♗xe3, 15.fxe3!? is an interesting try. See Chapter 8.1.1 for more details.

14.♘f5

One suggestion again is 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.fxe3 to unbalance the position, e.g. 15...♘e7 (15...g6 16.♖f1 ♕e7 17.♖f2±; 15...d5 16.exd5 ♕xd5 17.♕xd5 ♘xd5 18.♘e4 b6 19.g4±) 16.♔h2 ♕d7 17.♖e2 ♘g6 18.♖f1 c6 19.♖ef2 d5 20.exd5 cxd5 21.♘d2 ♖e6 22.♘f5 ♔h7 23.♕d1 ♖be8 24.♕f3 e4 25.dxe4 dxe4 26.♕e2 ♘e5 27.♘d4 ♖b6 28.♘c4 (28.♖xf6!?) 28...♕c7 29.♘xe5 ♖xe5 30.♔g1 ♖g5 31.♖f5 ♖xf5 32.♖xf5 ♕g3?! 33.b3 ♖d6 34.♕f2 ♕g6?! 35.c4 ♖d7 36.♕f4 ♘h5 37.♕xe4? (37.♕e5 leaves White with the better position) 37...♘g3 38.♕e8 ♖xd4 0-1 Vorobiov-Grischuk, Moscow blitz 2004.

14...d5 15.♕c2 ♕d7

16.♘3h4

This idea is relatively harmless. White does have other options:

A) **16.♗e3!?** creates slightly more pressure: **16...♗xe3 17.♘xe3 ♕e6 18.b4 ♖bd8 19.a4 dxe4 20.dxe4 ♘e7 21.c4?!** 21.♖ad1 ½-½ Kovalev-Yandemirov, Alushta 2013. **21...♘g6 22.♘d5 ♖d7 23.♖ad1 ♘h5 24.♘e3 ♖ed8 25.♖xd7 ♖xd7 26.♖d1 ♘f6 27.♖xd7 ♕xd7 28.b5**. White has the edge here as his knights are slightly better placed than Black's and he has more space on the queenside;

B) **16.♗xh6!?** should not lead to an advantage, but it may certainly be used as a surprise weapon: **16...gxh6** 16...dxe4 17.dxe4 gxh6 18.♕c1 ♖e6 19.♖d1 ♕e8 20.♕xh6 ♗xf2+ 21.♔f1 ♕f8 22.♕xf8+ ♖xf8 23.♔xf2 ♘xe4+ 24.♔e2±. **17.♕d2 ♖e6** 17...dxe4 18.♘3h4 ♘e7 19.♘xh6+ ♔f8 20.♕g5 ♘h7 21.♕h5 ♕e6 22.♘g4±. **18.♕xh6 ♘e8 19.♕h5 ♖g6**

20.exd5 20.♘h6+ ♔g7 21.♘f5+=. **20...♕xd5 21.♘3h4 ♕e6 22.♘xg6 fxg6 23.♘h6+ ♔g7 24.♕g5 ♕f6 25.♕xf6+ ♘xf6 26.♘g4 ♘xg4 27.hxg4 ♖f8 28.♖e2 ♖f4 29.♔f1 ♖xg4 30.♖e4 ♖g5 31.g4**, and the position is level.

16...♖e6 17.♕e2 dxe4 18.dxe4 ♖d8 19.♕f3 ♕d3 20.♗e3 ♗xe3 21.♖xe3 ♕c2 22.♖e2 ♕d3 23.♖e3

½-½ Hamdouchi-Tkachiev, Cap d'Agde rapid 2002.

Next in line are Jan Gustafsson's *Black repertoire against 1.e4*, 2nd volume: Open games, ChessBase DVD, Hamburg 2010 and *Bologan's Black Weapons*, New in Chess 2014, 1. option, p. 425, and 2. option, p. 433, which can all be dealt with together:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6

5...d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 is another move order.

Here Bologan recommends the rare but interesting continuation 7...a5 and gives 8.h3 ♗e6 9.♖e1 (9.b3!? is our main recommendation. For further details see Chapter 5.5) 9...h6 10.♗b3 ♗xb3 11.♕xb3 a4!? etc., with equal chances. Harassing the queen on b3 is one idea behind the a-pawn advance, as taking on b7 now seems very risky.

6.♘bd2 ♗a7 7.♗b3 d6 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 h6

Bologan now also gives **9...♗e6 10.♖e1** For 10.♗c2 see Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter. **10...♗xb3 11.♕xb3 ♕d7!? 12.♘f1 ♖fe8 13.♗g5** 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♘xe3 a5!? 15.a4 ♘e7 followed by ...♘g6 and ...b6; 13.♘g3 h6 14.♗d2 (14.a4 d5) 14...a5!? 15.a4 ♕e6!? 16.♕c2 (16.♕xb7 ♘e7 is risky for White) 16...d5. **13...♘h5 14.♖ad1 h6**

analysis diagram

and now we suggest **15.♗c1** instead of Bologan's 15.♗h4 a5!? 16.a4 ♘f4 17.♗g3 ♘e6 18.♘e3 ♗xe3 followed by ...♘c5 and ...♘e7, with pressure on a4: **15...b5** 15...♘f6 16.♘g3 ♗b6 17.d4±; 15...♗b6 16.d4 a5 17.a4±. **16.d4±**

10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♘f1 ♗e6 12.♘g3

For 12.♗c2!? see Giri-Anand in the Strategy chapter: 12...d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘g3 ♕d6 and now Jan does not mention our suggestion 15.♘h4!?. Bologan also does not go into too many details if White plays ♗c2.

12...♗xb3

Against 12...d5 Jan mentions 13.exd5!? and ends here. After 13...♗xd5 14.♗c2 we transpose to our repertoire – see Chapter 8.

13.♕xb3 ♖b8

13...♕d7. Jan just mentions this move additionally and ends here. We continue with 14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.fxe3 to unbalance the position, e.g. 15...d5 16.exd5 ♕xd5 17.♕xd5 ♘xd5 18.♖ad1 ♖ad8 19.♘e4 b6 20.g4 ♖e6 21.♔f2 ♘ce7 (Durarbayli-Caruana, Las Vegas 2015) and now we suggest 22.c4N – see Chapter 8.1.1.

14.♗e3 ♗xe3 15.♖xe3

15.fxe3!? is also interesting – see Chapter 8.

15...♕d7

And now instead of

16.♘h4?!

We prefer 16.d4!?N, which gives White a slight advantage, e.g. 16...g6 17.♖d1 b5 18.♕c2 ♔g7? 19.dxe5 ♘xe5 20.♘xe5 ♖xe5 21.f4 ♖ee8 22.e5 ♘h7 23.f5 ♕c6 24.e6±.

16...♕e6 17.♕xe6 ♖xe6 18.♘hf5 ♖d8=

Many repertoires based on the Two Knights Game give recommendations based on the following lines. We combine Emms' *Play the Open Games as Black*, Gambit 2000, *Bologan's Black Weapons*, New in Chess 2014, 2. repertoire option on p. 444ff, and *The Open Games with Black* by Martin Lokander, Everyman 2015.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 d6

5...0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 transposes.

6.a4 0-0 7.♖e1

In this move order, **7.a5**, which is not mentioned by Emms and Lokander, is interesting, e.g. **7...a6 8.c3 ♔h8 9.♘bd2**

A) **9...♘h5 10.d4 ♘f4 11.♘b3** 11.d5!?. **11...g5** 11...♗g4 12.♗xf4 exf4 13.♖e1 ♗h5 14.h3 g5 15.♘bd2 ♖b8 (15...g4? 16.♘h2+–; 15...♖g8?! 16.d5 ♘e5? 17.♘xe5+–) 16.b4±. **12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♕xd8 ♗xd8 14.g3 ♗e6 15.♘fd2 ♗xc4 16.♘xc4 ♘e6 17.♘e3±**;

B) **9...♘g8 10.♕b3 ♕e8** 10...f5 11.exf5 ♖xf5 (11...♗xf5 12.♕xb7 ♗d7 13.♗d5±) 12.♘e4±. **11.♖e1 f5 12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.♘e4 ♘f6 14.♘xf6 ♗xf6 15.♘g5 ♗xg5 16.♗xg5 ♖b8** 16...♕g6 17.♕xb7±. **17.♗h4 ♕g6 18.♖e3±**.

7...♔h8

Emms also gives 7...h6 8.a5 a6 9.c3, and now 9...♘h7 10.♘bd2±, which is not mentioned by Emms.

Bologan recommends 7...♗e6 8.♘bd2 ♕d7 9.c3 ♖fe8 10.b4 a6 and here we would like to introduce 11.♕b3!?N. For further details go to Chapter 3.

8.a5

8.c3 is an additional option for White that we didn't mention in Chapter 3. If you want to play this, do so at your own risk.

A) **8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗h5 10.a5 ♖b8 11.♘bd2 d5**

analysis diagram

and now Emms does not mention **12.♗b5!? dxe4 13.dxe4 a6 14.♗xc6 bxc6** and White has a choice between two alternatives:

A1) The solid endgame after 15.♘c4 ♕xd1 16.♖xd1 ♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♖b5 18.♗g5 ♔g8 19.♗h4 ♖e8 20.♗g3 ♗f8 21.♖d2 ♖c5 22.♘xe5 ♖cxe5 23.♗xe5 ♖xe5 24.♖d8 ♖e8 25.♖ad1 ♗e7 26.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 27.♖d7 ♔f8 28.e5;

A2) Or the risky 15.g4 ♘xg4 16.hxg4 ♗xg4 17.♕e2.

In both cases Black has not equalised completely.

B) **8...♘g8 9.d4 f5 10.dxe5 fxe4 11.♖xe4 ♖xf3 12.gxf3 ♘xe5** 12...♗f5 13.♖e1 ♘xe5 14.♗e2 ♕e8 15.♗f4 ♕g6+ 16.♗g3 ♖f8 17.♘a3±.

analysis diagram

13.♘a3!?N 13.♖xe5 dxe5 14.♕xd8 ♗xd8 15.♘d2 ♘f6 16.♘e4 ♘xe4 17.fxe4 ♗g4 18.♔g2 ♗h4 19.f3 ♗h5 20.♗e3 ♖d8 21.b4 h6 ½-½ Fedorchuk-Giri, Germany Bundesliga 2011/12. **13...♘xc4 14.♘xc4 ♕e8 15.♗f4**

and Lokander ends here with compensation. We are not sure if he is right. If you want to play this, take a closer look yourself.

8...a6 9.h3!

9.♘c3?! ♗g4! is annoying.

9...♘g8 10.♘c3 f5 11.♘d5 ♗f6 12.b4!

12.c3 has scored very well, but 12...fxe4 13.dxe4 ♘ce7 14.♘xf6 ♘xf6 15.♘g5 ♕e8 16.f4 h6 17.♘f3 ♕h5 'and Black has good kingside play' (Lokander). We agree.

12...fxe4 13.dxe4 ♘ce7 14.♘xf6N

14.♖a3 ♘xd5 15.exd5 ♘e7 16.♗f1 ♕e8 17.c4± Eliseev-Lastin, Moscow 2012.

14...♘xf6 15.♘g5

15.♗f1± is a much better try. White has an easy plan at his disposal by pushing the pawns on the queenside. Besides, he also has a nice bishop pair.

15...♕e8 16.f4 ♘c6!

'Black seems to be able to create good counterplay' (Lokander). It's less counterplay than more of a playable position for Black, as White gets compensation for a pawn after

17.f5 ♘xb4 18.c3 ♘c6 19.g4⩲

In any case, we recommend 14.♖a3 as in Eliseev-Lastin, or 14.♘xf6N ♘xf6 15.♗f1. For further details go to Chapter 3.

Next is Adrian Mikhalchishin's *1.e4 e5 – An Active Repertoire for Black*, ChessBase DVD 2012:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7

4...h6 is also mentioned: 5.c3 d6 6.0-0 g6 7.d4 ♕e7 8.♖e1 ♗g7 9.h3 0-0. Mikhalchishin does not give more details here. This is a main line and we deal with it in detail in Chapter 3.

5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 ♘a5 8.♗a2 c5 9.c3 ♘c6

And now our recommendation

10.♘a3

is not mentioned.

Next is Robert Ris: *A Black Repertoire Against the Two Knights*, ChessBase DVD 2014:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 ♔h8 8.a5 a6

And here Ris does not mention our suggestion

9.h3!?±

See Chapter 3.

And finally the recent *Playing 1.e4 e5, A Classical Repertoire*, Nikolaos Ntirlis, Quality Chess 2016:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 ♘a5 8.♗a2 c5 9.c3 ♘c6 10.♘a3 h6 11.♗d2

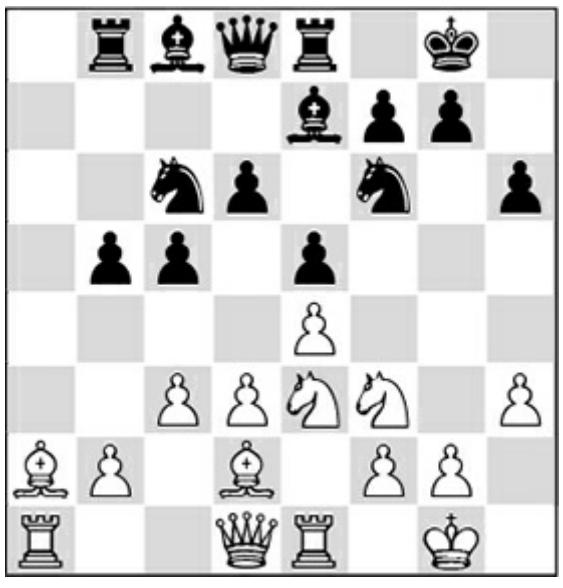
Saric on Chess24.

11...a6

(! Ntirlis.)

12.h3 ♖b8 13.♘c4 b5 14.axb5 axb5 15.♘e3 ♖e8!

(! Ntirlis).



We now suggest

16.♘h2 ♗e6 17.♗d5 ♕d7 18.♖a6 ♖ec8 19.♕f3 ♕b7 20.♖aa1 ♖a8 21.♘hg4 ♖xa1 22.♖xa1 ♖a8 23.♖xa8+ ♕xa8 24.♘f5

with a dangerous initiative.

Chapter 11
Strategy

Usually the strategy in the Slow Italian is quite simple. But of course there is more to it than just bringing White's queen's knight to e3 or g3 or playing for d3-d4. So we look at a few themes in more detail. In this chapter, the move orders are as they were in the games and are not unified, in contrast with the theory chapters.

11.1 – Black's knightmare – the monster knight on f5

One principal plan is to manoeuvre the queen's knight b1 via d2-f1-g3 to f5, where it exerts strong pressure against Black's kingside.

11.1.1 – The g-pawn as a battering ram

If Black has no direct counterplay in the centre and cannot use White's open kingside then this advance can help the attack a lot, as more roads can be opened:

Bartosz Socko 2623
Sabino Brunello 2540
Italy tt 2015 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♘bd2 a6 7.♗b3 0-0 8.0-0 ♗a7 9.h3 h6 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♘f1 ♗e6 12.♘g3 ♕d7

13.♘h4

Our main recommendation is 13.♗c2 – see Chapter 8.

13...♗xb3

13...♗xh3? is refuted by 14.gxh3 ♕xh3 15.♘hf5 ♘g4 16.♕f3 ♗xf2+ 17.♕xf2 ♘xf2 18.♔xf2+–.

14.axb3

Here it is more logical to take with the pawn, as the queen is needed on the kingside.

14...d5 15.♕f3 ♖e6

15...♖ad8? 16.♘gf5 (16.♗xh6+–) 16...dxe4 17.♕g3 ♘h5 18.♕g4 g6 19.♘xg6 fxg6 20.♕xg6+ ♘g7 21.♘xh6+ ♔h8 22.♘f7+ ♔g8 23.♘xd8 ♖xd8 24.dxe4+–.

16.♘gf5 ♔h7!

17.g4!?

The g-pawn starts the attack. This is usually good if Black can't get quick counterplay in the centre.

17...dxe4 18.dxe4

18...♘g8?

A) **18...♖d8!N** is more or less forced and Black can defend, e.g. **19.♕g2 ♘e7 20.♘xe7** 20.g5 hxg5 21.♗xg5 g6 22.♘xe7 ♕xe7 23.♘f5 ♕f8 24.♗xf6 ♖xf6 25.♕g5 ♖e6 26.♕h4+ ♔g8 27.♕g5 ♔h8 28.♕h4+=. **20...♕xe7 21.♘f5 ♕f8 22.♕f3 ♘g8 23.b4 g6 24.♗e3 ♗xe3 25.♘xe3 ♘f6 26.♖ad1 ♔g7=**;

B) **18...♘e7? 19.g5 hxg5 20.♗xg5 g6 21.♖ad1 ♕e8 22.♘h6 ♘eg8** 22...♔g7 23.♕g3 ♘h5 24.♕g4 ♘g8 25.♘4f5+ ♔h8 26.♘xg8 ♔xg8 27.♔h2 ♔h7 28.♕f3 ♘g7 29.♖g1 ♗c5 30.b4 ♗f8 31.♕g4± gxf5? 32.exf5 ♖d6 33.♖xd6 cxd6 34.♗f6+–. **23.♘xg8 ♘xg8 24.♖d5 ♖d6 25.♖xd6 cxd6 26.♖d1±**

19.g5

The battering ram knocks at the door.

19...♖d8?

19...g6! was the last chance to fight, e.g. 20.♖d1 (an important intermediate move) 20...♕e8 21.♘xh6 ♘xh6 22.gxh6 ♕e7 23.♕g3 ♖g8 24.♔g2 ♖d6 25.♖xd6 cxd6 26.b4 f5 27.♘f3 f4 28.♕g5 ♗b8 29.b5 axb5 30.♕xe7+ ♘xe7 31.♖a5±.

20.gxh6 g6 21.♕g2 ♗c5 22.♔h2 ♗f8 23.♖g1

23...♕e8?

A) 23...♘f6! is called for, but White remains on top after 24.♖a4 as 24...gxf5? runs into 25.exf5 ♖d6 26.♘f3 e4 27.♖xe4 ♖e8 28.♘g5+ ♔h8 29.♖h4 ♘e5 30.♘e4+–;

B) **23...♘xh6?! 24.♗xh6 ♗xh6 25.♘xh6 ♔xh6 26.♘f5+ ♔h7 27.♕g5 ♕d2 28.♕h4+ ♔g8 29.♖g4 ♖d3 30.♔g2 ♖d7 31.♘e3 ♕d6** 31...♕xb2? 32.♕h6+–. **32.♖d1 ♕e7 33.♖xd7 ♕xd7 34.♕h6 ♕d8 35.♖h4 ♕f6 36.♕h7+ ♔f8 37.♘d5 ♕g7 38.♘xc7±**;

C) 23...♘ce7?! 24.♘f3 f6 25.♘xe7 ♘xe7 26.♘h4 ♕e8 27.♗e3 ♖c6 28.♕f3±.

24.♘f3 f6 25.♕g4 ♕f7 26.♘3h4 ♘ce7

26...gxf5? 27.♕xf5+ ♔h8 28.♘g6+ +–.

27.♘xe7 ♘xe7 28.♗e3 ♗xh6?

28...♖c6 29.♕f3 ♖d3 30.♖g3 ♗xh6 31.♘xg6 ♘xg6 32.♕h5 ♖xe3 33.fxe3 f5 34.exf5 ♘h8 35.♕g4 ♖d6 36.♖ag1±.

29.♗xh6 ♔xh6

30.♘f5+

The monster knight has come back.

30...gxf5 31.exf5 ♖c6 32.♖a4

The second rook joins the party with decisive effect.

32...♖d2 33.♕g7+

1-0

11.1.2 – The ♘f5 is sacrificed and recaptured by gxf5

Sometimes the knight on f5 can even be sacrificed, and not only by ♘xg7 (for this see Giri-Anand) or ♘xh6+, but also by just staying on f5. Here White usually needs good control of the central inroads.

Alexander Areschenko 2644

Aleksey Aleksandrov 2601
Moscow 2007 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♗b3 ♗a7 7.0-0 d6 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♘f1 h6 12.♘g3 ♕d7 13.♗c2 d5 14.♕e2

Our main recommendation here is 14.exd5.

14...♖ad8

14...dxe4 15.dxe4 ♖ed8 (15...♗xh3? 16.gxh3 ♕xh3 17.♗e3±) 16.♔h2 ♘e8 17.♘h4 ♘e7= is another solid defensive set-up.

15.♔h2!?

This king move is most often played and Black should know how to meet it. Alternatives are:

A) The direct 15.♘h4 allows 15...♗xh3 16.gxh3 ♕xh3 17.♘hf5 ♘g4 18.♗e3 ♕h2+ 19.♔f1 ♕h3+ 20.♔g1 ½-½ Sedlak-Predojevic, Serbia tt 2007;

B) **15.♗d2 ♗c5 16.b4** 16.♖ad1 d4= Gelfand-Kramnik, Moscow blitz 2008. **16...♗f8 17.a4 b5 18.♖ed1 d4 19.♕e1 ♕c8 20.cxd4 exd4 21.♖db1±** Jonsson-Bujdak, LSS email 2010;

C) **15.a4 a5** 15...d4 16.a5 ♕d6 17.♗d2 ♘d7 (Pruijssers-J.Van Foreest, Maastricht 2013) 18.♘h4!?N ♘e7 19.c4 ♘f6 20.b4±. **16.♗d2 ♗c5=** Laurenc-Van Hengel, ICCF email 2010.

15...♔h8?!

The following set-up is quite passive.

A) **15...d4** is also very risky, if White manages to get going on the kingside, e.g.: **16.♖f1 b5 17.a3 ♕d6 18.♘h4 ♘e7 19.f4 dxc3 20.bxc3 c5 21.♗e3 ♘h7?** This runs into a very powerful attack, but Black's position is precarious in any case, e.g. 21...exf4 22.♗xf4 ♕b6 23.♗xh6 ♗b8 24.♗f4 ♗xf4 25.♖xf4 ♕c7 26.♕d2±. **22.f5 ♗d7 23.♘h5 ♘f6 24.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 25.♕h5 ♖a8 26.g4 c4 27.♗d2 g5 28.fxg6 fxg6 29.♕xh6+–** Clemente-Piccoli, corr 2000;

B) The solid approach is 15...b5 16.♘h4 dxe4 17.dxe4 ♘e7=;

C) **15...♕e7!?** (Emms) is also good as this stops 16.♘h4? due to 16...♘g4+–+. **16.♗d2!? N** is interesting, e.g. **16...b5 17.exd5 ♘xd5 18.b4 ♕d7** 18...♘f4 19.♗xf4 exf4 20.♘e4 ♗d5 21.♕f1=. **19.a4 f6 20.♘e4** with unclear and probably dynamically balanced play.

16.♘h4 ♘g8?!

16...♘e7 17.♕f3 dxe4 18.dxe4 ♘g6= (Emms).

17.♕f3 ♗c5 18.♘gf5 ♗f8 19.g4 g6

20.♖g1!

The point of Areschenko's concept. He just leaves his mighty knight on f5. It is important that all invasion squares on the d-file are under control.

20...dxe4 21.dxe4 gxf5?

This opens the floodgates for White. But the defence is already very difficult anyway, e.g. 21...♘ce7 22.♕g3 f6 23.♘xh6 ♗xh6 24.♗xh6 ♘xh6 25.g5 with an attack.

22.gxf5 ♗c4 23.f6 ♖e6?!

This runs into a powerful shot. 23...♕e6 limits the damage, e.g. 24.b3 ♗f1 25.♖xf1 ♕xf6 26.♕xf6+ ♘xf6 27.♗e3±.

24.♖xg8+! ♔xg8 25.♗e3 ♘e7

25...♔h7 26.♖g1 ♖d6?! 27.♕g3+–.

26.fxe7 ♗xe7 27.♖g1+ ♗g5 28.♕h5 ♖f6 29.b3 ♗b5 30.a4 ♗c6 31.♖xg5+ hxg5 32.♕xg5+ ♖g6 33.♘xg6 fxg6 34.b4 ♖e8 35.♗b3+ ♔h8 36.♕h4+ ♕h7 37.♗h6 ♖f8 38.♕g5 ♖xf2+ 39.♔g3 ♖f7 40.♕xe5+ ♖g7 41.♕g5 ♗e8 42.♗xg7+ ♕xg7 43.♕h4+ ♕h7 44.♕f6+ ♕g7 45.e5 g5 46.a5 ♕xf6 47.exf6 ♗d7 48.♗d5 ♗c8 49.♗f3 b6 50.♗g4 ♗b7 51.♗f5

1-0

11.2 – Power play on the light squares

This basically is the core of White's whole strategy. The bishop on c4 and the knight on g3 control vital light squares, which can be used to increase the pressure. It is especially good, of course, if Black's light-squared bishop can be exchanged:

Zoltan Almasi 2628
Viktor Kortchnoi 2619

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♗b3 d6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.0-0 ♗a7 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♖e1 h6 11.♘f1 d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♘1h2

This is an unusual path for the knight to take, but it is possible here and is quite dangerous for Black.

The usual 13.♘g3 is the main alternative, and 13.♘xe5 is the third option, which we have dealt with in Chapter 8.

13...♕d6 14.♘g4 ♗xg4 15.hxg4

White has more control over the light squares and can easily develop a very dangerous initiative on the kingside based on this.

15...♖ad8?!

For 15...♘f6 16.♘h4 ♖ad8 17.♗c2N see Chapter 8.

16.g5 h5

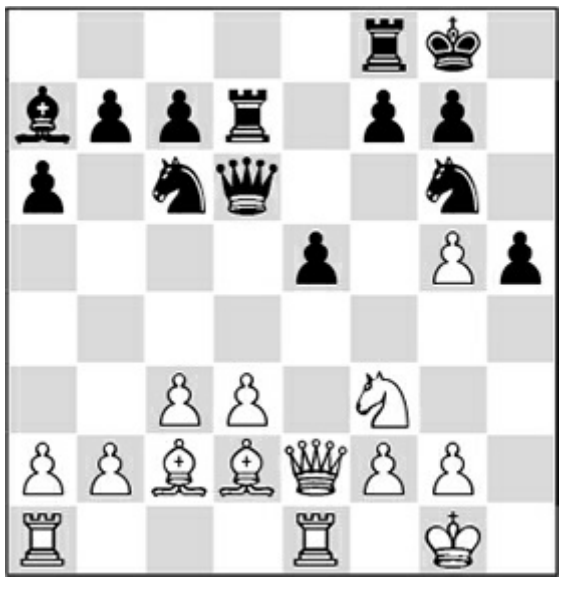
White's initiative on the light squares even continues after 16...hxg5 17.♗xg5 ♘f6 18.♗h4 ♕xd3 19.♕xd3 ♖xd3 20.♘xe5 ♘xe5 21.♖xe5 ♖d2 22.♖ae1 ♖xb2 23.♖f5 ♔h7 24.♗xf6 gxf6 25.♖e4 ♔g6 26.♖ef4 and Black's f-pawns will both fall. Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker here, as in a middlegame.

17.♕e2 ♖d7 18.♗d2

18.♕e4!?.

18...♘de7 19.♗c2 ♘g6

Now Almasi brings his last unit into play.



20.♖ad1?!

It is even stronger to play in the centre and on the queenside with 20.♕e4 ♕e6 21.b4 ♕g4 22.a4±.

20...♕d5 21.a3 ♖e7 22.♗c1 ♖fe8 23.♕e4 ♕d7 24.♗b3 ♔f8 25.♗e3

♗xe3 26.fxe3 ♕d6?!

26...♕g4 27.♕xg4 hxg4 28.♘d2 ♘a5 29.♗c2 b5 limits the damage.

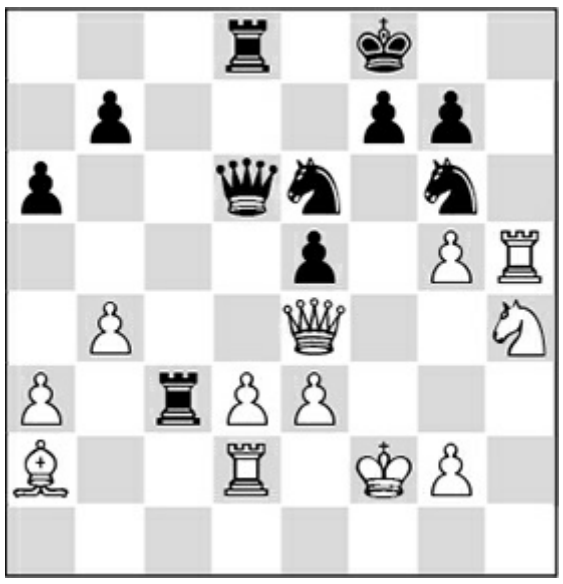
27.♔f2?

Almasi misses the moment for 27.♘h4 ♘xh4 28.♕xh4 g6 29.g4+–.

27...♘d8 28.♗a2 ♘e6 29.b4 c5 30.♖h1 cxb4 31.cxb4 ♖c7 32.♖d2 ♖c3?

Kortchnoi rushes with his counterplay. 32...♖ec8 is better and almost equal, e.g. 33.♗b3 ♖d7 34.♖xh5 ♖c3 35.♗xe6 ♕xe6 36.♘h4 ♕d5.

33.♖xh5 ♖d8 34.♘h4



34...♖xd3?

34...♘xh4 35.♗xe6 ♕xe6 36.♖xh4 ♖xa3 37.♔g1±.

35.♘xg6+?

Almasi misses the win of a piece with 35.♖xd3 ♕xd3 36.♕xd3 ♖xd3 37.♗xe6 ♘xh4 38.♗c4 ♖d2+ 39.♔e1 ♖xg2 40.♖xh4+–.

35...fxg6 36.♖h8+ ♔e7 37.♖xd3?

37.♖e8+ ♔xe8 38.♕xg6+ ♔f8 39.♕f5+ ♔e7 40.♖xd3 ♖f8 41.♕xf8+ ♘xf8 42.♖xd6 ♔xd6 43.♔f3 was the last chance to fight for the full point.

37...♕xd3 38.♕xd3 ♖xd3 39.♗xe6 ♔xe6 40.♖b8 ♖xa3 41.♖xb7 ♔f5 42.♖xg7 ♖a4

Draw agreed.

In the following game, White wins with a typical king attack on the light squares.

Wei Yi 2675
David Klein 2517
Wijk aan Zee 2015 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 d6 5.c3 ♘f6 6.d3 a6 7.♘bd2 ♗a7 8.♗b3 0-0 9.h3 h6 10.♖e1 ♖e8 11.♘f1 ♗e6 12.♗c2 d5 13.exd5 ♗xd5 14.♘g3 ♕d7 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.♖xe3

16...♘h7?!

This retreat is artificial.

17.♕e2 f6 18.♖d1 ♕f7

18...♗xa2? 19.b3 ♕f7 20.♘d2±.

19.♘f5 ♕h5?

The queen is too exposed now. Black should choose one of the following alternatives instead:

A) **19...♗xa2 20.d4** 20.c4 ♘g5 21.♗a4 b5 22.cxb5 ♘e7 23.♘xg5 hxg5 24.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 25.bxa6 ♖xa6 26.♗b5±. **20...♗c4 21.♕d2 ♖ad8 22.♕c1 exd4 23.♘3xd4 ♖xe3 24.♕xe3±**;

B) 19...♖ad8 20.h4±;

C) 19...♘g5 20.♘xg5 fxg5 21.d4±.

20.d4

20...e4?

This is a case of taking things too far. 20...♘g5 limits the damage, but White's initiative on the light squares remains very strong, even in the endgame, e.g. 21.♘g3 ♗xf3 22.♗b3+ ♔f8 (22...♔h7 23.♘xh5 ♗xe2 24.♖xe2 exd4 25.♖xe8 ♖xe8 26.cxd4± as 26...♖e2? runs into 27.♘g3 ♖xb2 28.h4+–) 23.♘xh5 ♗xe2 24.♖xe2 exd4 25.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26.♘f4 ♖e4 27.♘g6+ ♔e8 28.f3 ♖e2 29.cxd4 ♘a5 30.♗d5 ♔d7 31.b4 ♘c6 32.h4 ♘xb4 33.♗c4 ♘xf3+ 34.gxf3 ♖c2 35.♗b3 and White now has a big advantage.

21.♘g3! exf3?!

21...♕f7 22.♗xe4 ♗xe4 23.♖xe4± is forced.

22.♕d3! ♕g5 23.♕xh7+ ♔f8 24.♖de1 ♖xe3 25.♖xe3 ♖d8 26.gxf3 ♗xa2 27.b3 ♕d5

Now White's knight exploits the weak light squares:

28.♘e2 ♗xb3 29.♗xb3 ♕xb3 30.♘f4 ♕g8 31.♕f5 ♖e8

31...♕f7 32.♘e6++–.

32.♕c5+ ♔f7 33.♕d5+ ♔f8 34.♘g6#

In the next case, opposite-coloured bishops help White's cause:

Vassily Ivanchuk 2726
Yury Kryvoruchko 2706
Lviv ch-UKR 2014 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 a6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♖e1 h6 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.♘f1 ♗e6 11.♗e3

Our main recommendation is 11.♘g3 and another option is 11.♗c2.

11...♕d7

11...♗xe3 12.♘xe3 ♖e8 13.♗xe6 ♖xe6 is played most often, and often leads to a draw, but White is also slightly better here.

12.♗a4!?

Ivanchuk provokes a weakness of the light squares on the queenside.

12...b5 13.♗c2 ♘e7 14.d4 ♘g6 15.h3 c6 16.♘g3 ♕c7 17.♕d2 ♖fe8

18.♘f5

18.a4!? c5 19.♘f5 is the alternative.

18...♗xf5?!

This gives White the power play on the light squares for free. 18...d5!? is critical, e.g. 19.exd5 (19.♘xg7?! ♔xg7 20.exd5 ♗xd5 21.♗xh6+ ♔h8 22.♗xg6 fxg6 23.♘xe5 ♘e4 24.♖xe4 ♗xe4 25.♖e1 ♗d5 26.♕g5 ♖e6 27.♘xg6+ ♖xg6 28.♕xg6 ♕f7 and Black defends) 19...♗xf5 20.♗xf5 exd4 21.♗xd4 ♗xd4 22.♘xd4 ♘xd5 23.♗xg6 fxg6 24.a4±.

19.exf5 ♘f4 20.♗xf4 exf4 21.♕xf4 ♖xe1+?

This plays into White's hands. 21...c5 offers more options for counterplay on the dark squares.

22.♖xe1 ♖e8 23.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 24.g4 ♔f8 25.h4 f6

25...d5? runs into 26.♕xc7 ♘xc7 27.♘e5+–.

26.d5!?

Ivanchuk opens inroads on the light squares.

26...cxd5

26...c5 27.h5 c4 28.♘h4 ♔g8 29.♕e4 ♕d8 30.♘g6+–.

27.♗b3 ♕f7

28.g5?

Ivanchuk rushes. 28.♘d4 ♗xd4 29.♕xd4 ♘c7 30.♕b6 is strategically winning, e.g. 30...♕e7 (30...h5 31.gxh5 ♕xh5 32.♕xc7 ♕g4+ 33.♔f1 ♕h3+ 34.♔e1 ♕h1+ 35.♔d2+–) 31.♔f1 ♔e8 32.a4 ♕d7 33.♕b8+ ♕d8 34.♕b7 ♕d7 35.♗xd5+–.

28...hxg5 29.hxg5 ♕e7 30.♔f1?!

30.♕d2 was the last chance for White to fight on.

30...♕e4! 31.♕xe4 dxe4 32.♘d2 e3 33.♘e4 fxg5 34.f3 ♔e7 35.♔e2 g4 36.fxg4 ♘f6 37.♘xf6 gxf6 38.♗d5 ♔d7 39.b4 ♗b6 40.♗b7 a5 41.a3 axb4 42.axb4 ♔c7 43.♗e4 ♔d7 44.♔f3 ♔c7 45.♗d5 ♔d7 46.♗f7 ♔e7 47.♗e6 ♔d8 48.♔e2 ♔c7 49.♔d3 ♔d8 50.c4 bxc4+ 51.♗xc4 ♔d7 52.♗b5+ ♔c7 53.♔e4 d5+ 54.♔xd5 e2 55.♗xe2

½-½

As the light squares are so important, one strategy for White is to answer ...♗e6 almost always with ♗c2, to keep the potential of this bishop. In a way this is even more critical

than our main suggestion to stay with ♗b3 until the 13th move, and Anish Giri plays according to this strategy:

Anish Giri 2773
Viswanathan Anand 2803
Stavanger blitz 2015 (3)
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3

5...d6

One way to meet 5...a6 is with 6.0-0 ♗a7 7.♗b3 d6 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♗c2, with a transposition to the game.

One possible line after 5...0-0 is 6.0-0 d6 7.♘bd2 a6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 with transposition.

6.0-0 a6

For 6...♗e6 7.♗xe6 (7.♗b5 a6 8.♗a4 b5 9.♗c2 is an alternative to preserve the bishop) 7...fxe6 8.b4 ♗b6 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.♕b3 see Chapter 5.4.

For 6...0-0 7.♘bd2 a5 8.h3 ♗e6 9.b3 see Chapter 5.4.3.

7.♗b3 ♗a7

A) **7...♗e6 8.♗c2 ♗a7** 8...0-0?? 9.d4+–. **9.♘bd2 0-0 10.h3** transposes to the game;

B) 7...0-0 8.♘bd2 ♗e6 9.♗c2 ♗a7 10.h3 transposes;

C) Against the Kramnik move order 7...h6 8.♘bd2 0-0, it is important to answer with 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♗c2 to preserve the bishop.

8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♗c2!?

This is a very interesting alternative, which is sharper and more critical for both sides. 10.♖e1 is our main recommendation.

10...♖e8

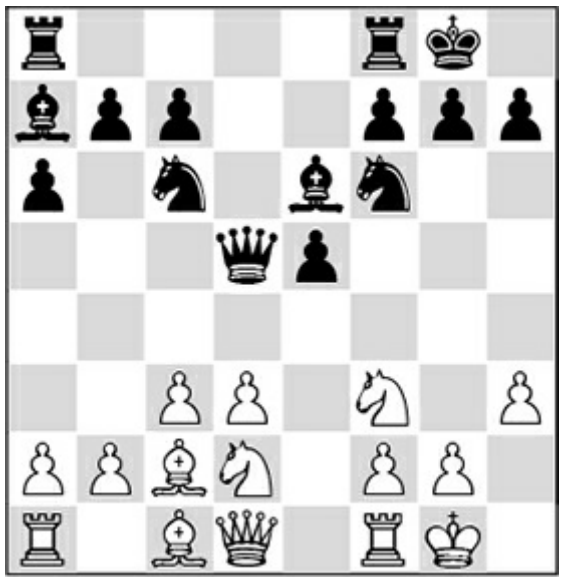
A) **10...d5**

analysis diagram

11.exd5 is Anish Giri's choice. Note that 11.♖e1?! (11.♘g5 is an alternative) can be met by 11...dxe4 12.dxe4 ♘h5 13.♘f1 (Karpov-Kortchnoi, Merano Wch 1981) 13...♕f6!N (Emms), which is annoying.

A1) **11...♗xd5 12.♖e1 ♖e8** (Strohhaeker-Hirneise, Prievidza 2008) **13.b4 ♘h5 14.a4 ♘f4 15.♘e4 ♘g6 16.♗d2 ♕d7** 16...b5 17.♗e3 ♗xe3 18.fxe3±. **17.b5 ♘ce7 18.c4 ♗xe4 19.dxe4 ♖ad8 20.♕e2 ♕e6 21.♔h2 ♘f4 22.♗xf4 exf4 23.e5 h6 24.♕e4 ♘g6 25.♔g1±**;

A2) The recapture **11...♕xd5** is only possible because the bishop is not on b3. Against our main recommendation this position cannot arise. Only in Chapter 8.2.2.1 do we mainly recommend an early ♗c2, and then Black can take back with the queen on d5.



analysis diagram

12.♖e1 12.♘g5!?. **12...h6 13.♕e2** After 13.♘f1 one recent game went 13...♖fe8 14.♘g3 ♖ad8 15.b4 ♕d6 16.♗d2 ♘d5?! 17.♕e2?! (17.a4!?N) 17...♕d7 18.♕e4 f5 19.♕h4 f4?! 20.♘e4 ♕e7? 21.♕xe7 ♖xe7 22.a4± Vovk-Loos, Wunsiedel 2016. **13...♖fe8 14.♘f1 ♖ad8 15.♘g3 ♕d7** 15...b5 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.♕xe3 ♗c8 18.♘h4± Golubov-Ovod, Moscow 2016; 15...♗c5 (Radjabov-Aronian, Dresden ol 2008) 16.b4N ♗f8 17.a4±. **16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.fxe3 ♘d5** 17...♕d6 18.♕f2 ♗d5 (Bok-Heimann, Berlin Wch blitz 2015) 19.e4N ♗e6 20.d4±. **18.d4 exd4 19.exd4±** Radjabov-Anand, Dubai Wch rapid 2014;

A3) **11...♘xd5 12.♖e1**

analysis diagram

12...♘f4 12...f6 13.d4 ♕d7 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 (14...fxe5 15.♘c4±) 15.♘xe5 fxe5 16.♘f3 ♕d6 17.♗g5±. **13.♘c4 ♗xc4?!** 13...♘g6! 14.♗g5 (14.♘g5!?) 14...f6 15.♗e3 ♕d7 16.♗xa7 ♖xa7 17.♘e3 ♖aa8 18.♖e2 ♖ad8 19.♖d2 ♕f7 20.d4 exd4 21.♘xd4 ♘xd4 22.♖xd4±. **14.dxc4 ♕xd1 15.♖xd1 ♘e2+ 16.♔f1 ♘xc1 17.♖axc1 ♖ae8 18.♖d7 ♗b6 19.♘g5 ♘b8 20.♖d2 g6 21.♖e1 c6 22.♘e4 ♖d8 23.♖ed1 ♖xd2 24.♖xd2 ♖d8 25.♖xd8+**

♗**xd8 26.c5** ♔**f8 27.**♘**d6 b6 28.**♘**c4 bxc5 29.**♘**xe5** and White was for choice in Giri-Beliavsky, Reykjavik 2015, and won later.

B) 10...h6 11.♖e1 ♖e8 12.♘f1 d5 transposes to the game.

11.♘**g5** ♗**d7 12.**♘**gf3** ♗**e6 13.**♖**e1 h6 14.**♘**f1 d5 15.exd5** ♗**xd5**

A) 15...♕xd5 see line A2 on the preceding page;

B) 15...♘xd5 16.♘g3 leads to Chapter 8.2.2.2.2.

16.♘**g3** ♕**d7**

17.♘**h4**

17.♗e3 is our main recommendation.

17...♖**ad8 18.**♘**hf5** ♔**h8**

Now Anish Giri directly starts a violent attack, which objectively should only lead to a draw.

A) After **18...**♗**c5**, **19.**♗**xh6!** is also very interesting, for example: **19...gxh6 20.**♕**c1** ♘**h7?!** 20...♗f8!? 21.♘xh6+ ♔h7 22.d4+ e4 23.♘hf5 also gives White good compensation. **21.d4** ♗**f8 22.**♘**xh6+** ♗**xh6 23.**♕**xh6 e4** (Krause-Baramidze, Kiel 2016) **24.**♘**xe4** ♖**e6 25.**♕**f4** ♕**e7 26.**♖**e3** with more than enough compensation for the material;

B) **18...**♘**e7 19.**♖**xe5** ♘**xf5 20.**♖**xf5** ♕**e7** 20...♕c6 21.d4± ♗xg2? 22.♖xf6+– Smirin-Pelletier, Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011; 20...♕e6 21.♗f4 ♕c6 22.♕f1± Andriasyan-Dorfanis, Kavala 2016. **21.**♗**f4** ♗**e6 22.**♖**e5** ♘**d5 23.**♕**f3** ♘**xf4 24.**♕**xf4 c6 25.**♖**e2**± Kadric-Lazic, Bihac 2016.

19.d4

19.♗e3!?.

19...exd4 20.♘**xg7!** ♖**xe1+**

20...♔**xg7?** runs into the typical blow **21.**♗**xh6+**:

analysis diagram

21...♔h8 21...♔xh6 22.♕d2+ ♖e3 23.♘f5+ ♕xf5 24.♗xf5 dxc3 25.bxc3 ♗e4 26.♕c1 ♗xf5 27.♖xe3 ♗xe3 28.♕xe3+ ♔g7 29.♕g3+ ♗g6 30.♕xc7±. **22.♕d2 ♖xe1+?!** 22...♘h7 23.♗xh7 dxc3 (23...♔xh7 24.♕g5 f6 25.♕h4 ♖h8 26.c4 ♗xc4 27.♘e4 ♕f5 28.g4 ♖dg8 29.♘xf6++–) 24.♕f4 ♔xh7 25.♕h4 f5 26.♗d2+ ♔g8 27.♗xc3 ♕h7 28.♕g5+ ♔f8 29.♘xf5±. **23.♖xe1 ♖g8** 23...♘h7 24.♗xh7 ♔xh7 25.♕g5 ♖g8 26.♕h4+–. **24.♕f4 ♘h7 25.♗xh7 ♔xh7 26.♕h4 ♖g6 27.♗g5+ ♔g8 28.♗f6 ♖xf6 29.♕xf6 ♗c5 30.♘h5 ♗f8 31.♕g5+ 1-0** Ganguly-Kollars, Gibraltar 2016.

21.♕xe1 ♔xg7

The computer gives 21...♗xg2 22.♔xg2 d3= and one sample line runs 23.♗xd3 ♕xd3 24.♘7f5 ♔h7 25.♗f4 ♘d5 26.♗xh6 ♖g8 27.♕b1 ♖xg3+ 28.fxg3 ♕e2+ 29.♔h1 ♕f3+ 30.♔h2 ♕e2+=.

22.♗xh6+ ♔h8

22...♔xh6? 23.♕d2+ ♔g7 24.♘f5+±.

23.♕d2

23.♗g5 ♘e8 24.♗f5 ♗e6 25.♗xe6 ♕xe6 26.♕xe6 fxe6 27.♗xd8 ♘xd8=.

23...♖g8 24.♕f4

24...♕d6?

24...♘h5 25.♗g7+ ♔xg7 26.♘xh5+ ♔f8 27.♕h6+ ♔e7 28.♖e1+ ♔d8 29.♘f6 ♖xg2+ 30.♔f1 ♖xf2+ 31.♔xf2 d3+ 32.♖e3 ♗xe3+ 33.♔xe3 ♕e6+ 34.♔xd3 ♗c4+ 35.♔d2=.

25.♕h4 ♕xg3 26.fxg3

1-0

11.3 – Space advantage

This is a typical scenario for the Slow Italian. White has nothing really special, but a slight

space advantage. Now both wings can be used to increase the pressure more and more:

Ivan Saric 2661
Danny Raznikov 2494
Jerusalem Ech 2015 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 0-0 7.♖e1 h6 8.♘bd2 a6 9.♘f1 ♗a7 10.♗b3 ♖e8 11.h3 ♗e6 12.♘g3 d5 13.exd5 ♗xd5 14.♗c2 ♗c5 15.♗e3 ♗f8 16.♕e2 ♕d7 17.♘e4 ♘xe4 18.dxe4 ♗e6

A typical configuration has arisen. White can play with the pawns on both wings to use his space advantage and slight initiative. It should of course be possible to defend, but it is neither fun nor easy for Black.

19.b4 ♕e7 20.a4 ♕f6 21.♘d2 ♘e7 22.♕f3 ♕h4

22...♕xf3 23.♘xf3 f6 24.♘d2 ♘g6 25.♘b3 b6 26.♖ad1 ♘f4 27.h4±.

23.♗d3 ♘g6

24.♗f1

The start of a typical regrouping and play on the kingside.

24...♖ad8 25.♘c4 ♗c8 26.g3 ♕e7 27.♖ad1 ♖xd1 28.♖xd1 ♖d8 29.h4 f6 30.♘a5 ♘h8 31.♗c4+ ♘f7 32.♖xd8 ♕xd8 33.♕h5 ♕e8 34.♗d5

White has made great progress on both wings and now Black is on the verge of an abyss.

34...c6?

34…b5 35.axb5 (35.♕e2 ♗d7 36.♕a2 g5) 35…axb5 36.♘c6 ♗e6 was forced when White is better and can continue to create pressure, but maybe Black can defend.

35.♗b3 ♗e6?

35…♗d6 offers more resistance, e.g. 36.♕g6 ♔f8 37.♗b6 ♘h8 38.♕h7 ♘f7 39.♗e3 b5 40.♗xh6 ♘xh6 41.♕h8+ ♔e7 42.♕xg7+ ♘f7 43.♘xc6+ ♕xc6 44.♕xf7+ ♔d8 45.♕xf6+ ♔c7 46.♗d5 ♕e8 47.a5±.

36.♗xe6 ♕xe6 37.♘xb7 ♕b3 38.♕g4 ♕xc3 39.♕c8 ♕xb4?! 40.♗c5 ♕b1+ 41.♔h2 ♔h7 42.♗xf8 ♕xe4 43.♕d7 ♕f3 44.♗c5

1-0

Hrvoje Stevic 2604
Tapani Sammalvuo 2422

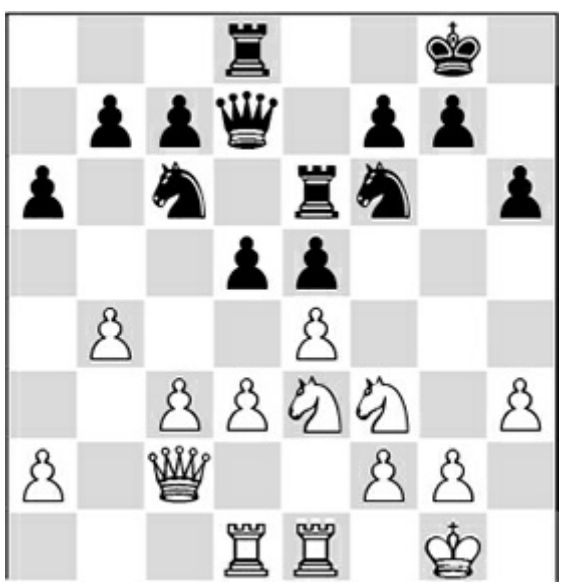
Reykjavik Ech-tt 2015 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♖e1 0-0 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♘bd2 h6 11.♘f1 ♖e8 12.♗xe6

Our main recommendation is 12.♘g3, but White has many moves here and the game continuation is also very interesting.

12...♖xe6 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♘xe3 d5 15.♕a4

Another approach is 15.♕c2 ♕d7 16.b4 ♖d8 17.♖ad1



analysis diagram

and White has a slight initiative due to the space advantage on the queenside, e.g. 17…dxe4 (17…d4 18.cxd4 exd4 19.♘f5 ♘xb4 20.♕b3 c5 21.♘3xd4±) 18.dxe4 ♖d6 19.a4 ♕e6 20.♖xd6 ♖xd6 21.b5 axb5 22.axb5 ♘a5 23.c4 ♖d8 24.♖a1 b6 25.♘d5±.

15...♕d7 16.♖ad1 ♖d8 17.♕b3 b5 18.a3 dxe4 19.dxe4 ♖d6 20.a4 b4

21.♕c4?!

The alternative 21.♖xd6!? cxd6 22.cxb4 ♖b8 23.♕c4 ♖xb4 24.♕xa6± creates more pressure.

21...bxc3 22.bxc3 ♘a5 23.♕c5 ♘b7?

Black should continue to hunt the queen with 23...♘c6 24.♖xd6 ♕xd6 25.♕c4 ♘a5=.

24.♕b4 c5 25.♕c4 ♕c7 26.♘d5 ♘xd5 27.♖xd5 ♖xd5 28.exd5

28...f6?

28...♘a5 is called for, but now White can turn his attention to the kingside: 29.♕e4 f6 (29...♕b7 30.c4 ♖e8 31.♘h4) 30.♘h4 ♘b7 31.♘f5 ♘d6 32.♘xd6 ♕xd6 33.c4 ♖b8 34.a5 ♖b4?! 35.f4 with a dangerous initiative in both cases.

29.♖b1!

Now Black's weak queenside can no longer be defended. An open file is like an open wound.

29...♘d6

29...♖d6 30.♘h4 ♔h7 31.f4+–; 29...♕f7 30.♕xa6+–.

30.♕xa6 e4 31.♘d2 e3 32.fxe3 ♕e7 33.♕d3

33...c4?!

Desperation, but it is not likely that Black can hold after 33...♕a7 34.♖a1 ♕a5 35.e4+–.

34.♘xc4 ♘xc4 35.♕xc4 ♕xe3+ 36.♔h1 ♕d2 37.a5 ♕xd5 38.♕xd5+ ♖xd5 39.♖a1

39.a6 ♖a5 40.♖b8+ ♔f7 41.♖a8 is easier.

39...♔f7 40.a6 ♖d8 41.a7 ♖a8 42.♔h2 ♔e6 43.♔g3 ♔d5 44.♔f4 g6 45.g4 ♔c4 46.♖a3 ♔d3 47.h4 g5+ 48.hxg5 fxg5+ 49.♔f5 1-0

Viswanathan Anand 2762
Levon Aronian 2764
Moscow ct 2016 (9)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4

In his annotations on Carlsen-Anand, Leuven rapid 2016, Magnus' second Peter Heine Nielsen remarks in ChessBase Magazine 173: 'All the rage. The Italian game used to be considered dull and drawish, but these days with the Berlin being exactly that, old evaluations have to be reconsidered, and Vishy even had this position as many as 8(!) times in the tournament.'

3...♗c5 4.0-0 d6 5.d3 ♘f6 6.c3 a6 7.a4 ♗a7 8.♘a3

8...♘e7

Two recent typical games went:

A) **8...h6 9.♘c2 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘e7** 10...♗xe3 11.♘xe3 ♖e8 (Kasimdzhanov-Lalith, Tashkent Ach 2016) 12.♕b3N ♕e7 13.a5 ♖b8 14.♕c2 ♗e6 15.b4±. **11.♗xa7 ♖xa7 12.♘e3 ♘g6 13.a5 c6 14.♕b3 ♘f4 15.g3**. Now Black acted too early in the centre, but White is slightly better in any case: **15...d5? 16.exd5 cxd5 17.gxf4 dxc4 18.♕b6! exf4 19.♕xa7 fxe3 20.♕xe3 cxd3 21.♕d4±** Gao Rui-Xu Jun, Xinghua ch-CHN 2016;

B) **8...0-0 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗h4**

B1) **10…♗g4 11.h3 ♗h5** (Brunello-Guichard, France tt 2016) **12.g4 ♗g6 13.♘c2±**;

B2) **10…♗e6 11.b4 ♕e7 12.♖e1 ♗xc4 13.♘xc4 ♕e6 14.b5 ♘e7** (Daulyte-Haast, France tt W 2016) **15.♗xf6N ♕xf6 16.♖b1 ♕e6** 16…axb5 17.♖xb5 ♖ab8 18.♕e2 ♘g6 19.g3±; 16…♘g6 17.b6 cxb6 18.♘xb6 ♗xb6 19.♖xb6 ♖ab8 20.♘d2±. **17.b6 cxb6 18.♘xb6 ♖ab8 19.d4** 19.a5±. **19…♘c8 20.d5 ♕e8 21.a5±**;

B3) 10…g5 11.♗g3 ♗g4 12.♘c2 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.d4 exd4 (Dragun-Gajewski, Poznan ch-POL 2016) 15.♕d3!?N ♖e8 16.♖fe1 ♗e6 17.♘fxd4±.

9.♘c2

Later Anand played 9.♗g5 c6 10.♘c2 0-0 and here instead of 11.♘h4 (11…d5 12.exd5 ♘exd5 13.♘f3 ♕d6 14.♖e1 ♗g4= Anand-Giri, Moscow 2016). 11.♗xf6!?N gxf6 12.d4 is more principled: 12…d5 13.exd5 cxd5 14.♗b3 e4 15.♘h4 ♔h8 16.f3 ♕b6 17.♘e3 and White is somewhat better.

9…♘g6

9…0-0 10.♗e3 ♗xe3 11.♘xe3 ♘g6, 12.a5 ♘g4 13.h3 ♘xe3 14.fxe3 ♕e7 15.♕b3 c6 16.d4 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♖ad1 ♖ae8 19.♕b4 exd4 20.cxd4 e5?! (after 20…♖f7N 21.♘d2 White keeps some pressure. Maybe not a lot, but it is annoying and for Black it is difficult to completely equalise – Peter Heine Nielsen) 21.dxe5 dxe5 22.♕xe7 ♖xe7 23.♖d6 (Carlsen-Anand, Leuven rapid 2016) with a slightly better ending for White, which was won in instructional style: 23…♘h8 24.♘d2?! ♘f7?! 25.♖d3 ♘g5 26.♖f5 h6 27.h4 ♘h7 28.♘b3 ♘f6 29.♘c5 ♖ff7 30.h5 ♔h7? (30…♖e8 is called for) 31.♖d8 g6 32.hxg6+ ♔xg6 33.♖d6 ♔g7 34.♘e6+ ♔g6 35.♘d8 ♖f8 36.g4 c5 37.b3 ♖ee8 38.♘xb7 1-0. Later, in the blitz game, the players had the same position with colours reversed after 10 moves, and Magnus chose 11…a5, not allowing White to gain space on the queenside (Peter Heine Nielsen): 11…a5 12.♖e1 ♘g6 13.♗b3 c6 14.♗c2 ♖e8 15.d4 ♕c7= Anand-Carlsen, Leuven blitz 2016.

10.♗e3 0-0 11.♗xa7 ♖xa7 12.♘e3 ♘g4 13.♕d2 a5 14.d4 ♖a8 15.dxe5 ♘4xe5 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.♗b3 ♘d7

17…♗e6!? might be better, to reduce the pressure.

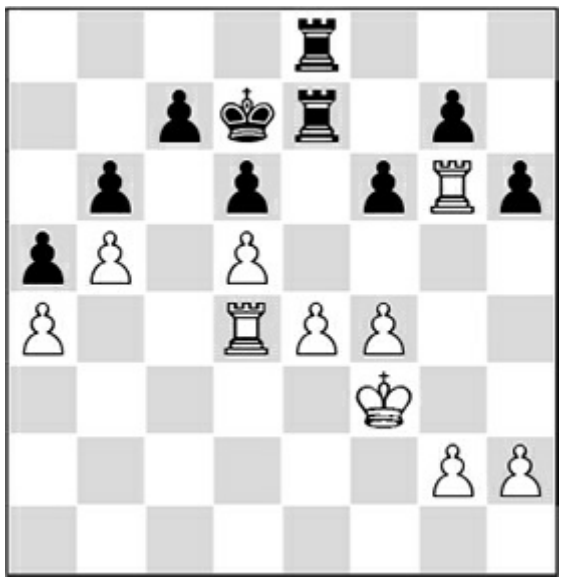
18.♗c2 ♖e8 19.f3 b6 20.♖fd1 ♘c5

21.b4

Anand grabs further space on the queenside.

21...♘d7 22.♗b3 ♘f6 23.♕d4 ♕e7 24.♘d5 ♘xd5 25.♗xd5 ♖a7 26.b5 ♗b7 27.c4 ♕e5 28.♖ac1 ♕xd4+ 29.♖xd4 ♔f8 30.♔f2 ♔e7 31.f4 f6 32.♖c3 ♔d7 33.♖h3 h6 34.♖g3 ♖e7 35.♖g6 ♗xd5 36.cxd5 ♖a8 37.♔f3 ♖ae8

Now Anand uses his space advantage to activate his king.



38.♔g4!?

One advantage of the more advanced pawns is that they are quicker in the resulting pawn races.

38...♖xe4?

In the end White will profit from the open roads and the race, as he is quicker. 38...♖h8 was called for.

39.♖xg7+ ♔c8

39...♔d8 40.♖xe4 ♖xe4 41.♔f5 ♖xa4 42.g3±.

40.♖d2 ♔b8 41.♖c2?!

The computer prefers 41.♔f5 ♖xa4 42.g3±.

41...♖c8?!

41...♖xa4 42.♖cxc7 ♖g8 is slightly more active due to the passed a-pawn.

42.♖a2 ♖d4 43.♔f5 ♖xd5+?

43...♖f8 was more tenacious, but it is not likely that Black can survive after 44.g3 as he is so passive.

44.♔xf6 ♖f8+ 45.♖f7 ♖xf7+ 46.♔xf7 ♖f5+ 47.♔g6 ♖xf4 48.g3 ♖c4 49.♔xh6

White's connected passed pawns will decide the day.

49...d5 50.♔h5 d4 51.g4 d3 52.h4 ♖d4 53.♖d2 ♔c8 54.g5 ♔d7 55.♔g6 ♖xh4 56.♖xd3+ ♔e8 57.♖a3 ♖c4

57...♖f4 58.♔g7 ♖f7+ 59.♔h6+–.

58.♔g7 ♔d7 59.g6 c6 60.♔f6 cxb5 61.g7 ♖g4 62.axb5 ♖g1

62...♔d6 63.♖e3 ♖xg7 64.♔xg7 ♔c5 65.♖b3 a4 66.♖b1 ♔c4 67.♔f6 a3 68.♔e5 a2 69.♖a1+–.

63.♖d3+ ♔e8 64.♖e3+ ♔d7 65.♖e5 ♖xg7 66.♖d5+!?

1-0

A nice point at the end, but the normal 66.♔xg7 wins as well.

11.4 – Initiative

White often has an initiative based on having slightly quicker central play:

Nikita Vitiugov 2724
Krishnan Sasikiran 2638
Doha 2015 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.c3 d6 6.♗b3 a6 7.0-0 h6 8.♖e1 0-0 9.♘bd2 ♗e6 10.♘f1 ♗xb3 11.♕xb3 ♖e8 12.♗e3 ♗xe3 13.♘xe3 ♕d7 14.h3 ♘e7

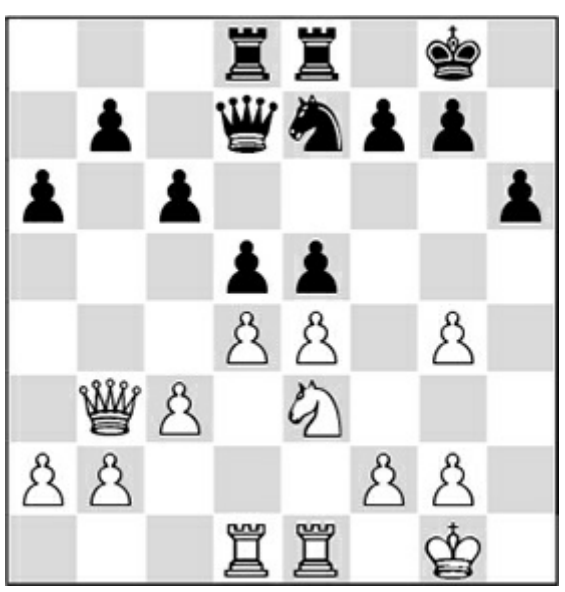
White's play in the centre is a bit quicker as the knight on e3 is very well placed, but it is not easy to develop it. Vitiugov chooses a typical plan:

15.♘h2!? c6 16.♘hg4 ♘xg4 17.hxg4 d5 18.♖ad1 ♖ad8

18...d4 19.cxd4 exd4 20.♘f5 c5 21.♖c1 ♖ac8 22.♕d1 ♖c6 23.b3 ♕c7 24.g3 b5 25.♖e2±.

19.d4!?

White's initiative will continue even after this central advance as his pieces are more active.



19...exd4 20.♖xd4 c5 21.♖d2 d4 22.cxd4 cxd4 23.♖ed1 ♘c6 24.f3

24...g6?

The cure is worse than the disease. 24...♖e5 25.♘f5 ♕c7 26.♕c4 is only marginally better for White.

25.♘d5 ♔g7?! 26.♕b6 ♖e6?!

Not the best, but good advice is already hard to give, e.g. 26...♕c8 27.♖xd4 ♘xd4 28.♕xd4+ ♔h7 29.g5±.

27.♖xd4 ♘xd4 28.♕xd4+ f6 29.♘c7! ♖e7

29...♕xc7 30.♕xd8±.

30.♘e8+ ♕xe8 31.♕xd8 ♕f7 32.♖d6 g5 33.b3 ♖e8 34.♕b6 ♖e7 35.♕d4 ♖e6 36.♖d7 ♖e7 37.♖d5

Of course White does not exchange his attacking potential.

37...♕e8 38.a4 ♕c6 39.♖d6 ♕c1+ 40.♔f2 ♖f7 41.e5 ♕c2+ 42.♔g3

Black resigned.

In the next game, White first plays on the wings, and only later does the typical d3-d4 come.

Daniel Naroditsky 2633
Dmitry Jakovenko 2744

Tsaghkadzor Wch tt 2015 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1

'A tricky move order. White doesn't want to allow the early ...d7-d5 advance' (Roiz in CBM 166).

6...d6 7.c3 a6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 9.h3 h6 10.♘bd2 ♖e8 11.♘f1 ♗e6 12.♗c2

Our main recommendation is 12.♘g3, but Naroditsky's approach is also interesting.

12...d5 13.♕e2 b5 14.♖d1!N

'An interesting approach – now the potential idea of d3-d4 is quite unpleasant, so Black should be ready to release the pressure in the centre sooner or later. This important novelty definitely poses Black some practical problems' (Roiz).

14...d4 15.♘g3 a5 16.♗b3!?

White exchanges the light-squared bishops now to exploit the weakened light squares in Black's camp.

16...a4 17.♗xe6 ♖xe6

17...fxe6 18.♗d2 ♕d6 19.♖ac1 is slightly better for White (Roiz).

18.♘f5

'The appearance of White's knight on f5 is always a cause of worries for a second player' (Roiz)!

18...a3 19.♕c2 axb2 20.♗xb2 dxc3 21.♗xc3 ♕e8

21...b4!? 22.♗d2 ♗b6 23.♖ab1 ♕f8 24.♖b2±.

22.♕b2 ♖b8 23.♖ac1 ♔h7 24.a3 g6 25.♘e3 ♗xe3 26.fxe3 ♘d7?!

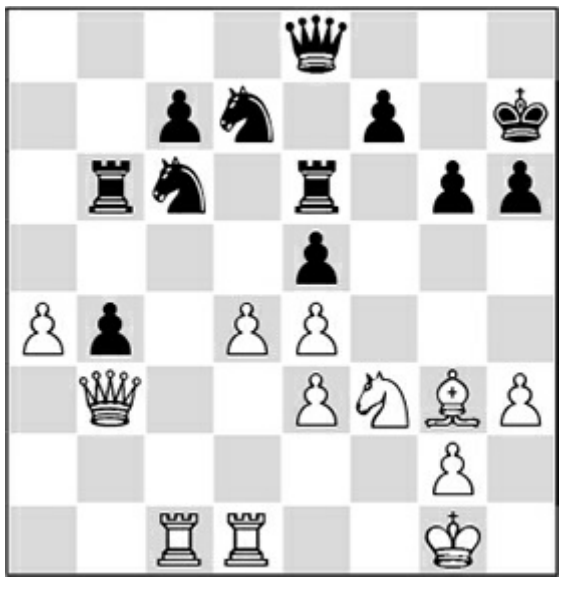
26...♖b6 27.♖f1 ♕e7 makes it more difficult to make progress.

27.♗e1 ♖b6 28.♗g3 b4

28...♖e7 29.♖f1 f6 30.d4±.

29.a4 ♖a6 30.♕b3 ♖b6 31.d4

Finally the typical central push has arrived.



31...exd4?

31...♖e7! 32.♖f1 f6± (Roiz).

32.exd4 ♘a5

32...♖xe4 33.♗xc7 ♖e3 34.♖d3 ♖xd3 35.♕xd3 ♖a6 36.♕xa6 ♕e3+ 37.♔h2 ♕xc1 38.♕b7+– (Roiz).

33.♕d5

33.♕d3!?+–.

33...c5 34.dxc5 ♘f6 35.♕d8 ♖a6 36.♕xe8 ♖xe8 37.♖d6 ♖c6

37...♖ea8 38.♘d2 ♘e8 39.♖b6 ♘c6 40.♘c4+– (Roiz).

38.♘e5 ♖xd6 39.cxd6 ♘xe4 40.d7 ♖d8 41.♗e1!? f6 42.♖c8 ♘b7

43.♖xd8 ♘xd8 44.♗xb4 fxe5 45.a5 ♘f6 46.a6 ♘xd7 47.a7 ♘b6 48.♗a5 ♘a8 49.♗xd8 ♔g7 50.♔f2 ♔f7 51.♔e3

1-0

Of course the initiative can also lead to a direct king attack:

Dan Tratatovici 2206
Ilay Kremer 1622
Kiryat Ono ch-ISR qf 2015 (8)
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.0-0

For our recommendation 8.♘e4 see Chapter 4.4.

8...a6?!

8...♘b6 is critical.

9.♖e1 b5?! 10.♗b3 ♘f4?!

11.d4!

This is the typical counter-blow in the centre.

11...exd4 12.♘e4 ♗d6 13.♘fg5 ♗e6?

This move loses more or less by force. 13...♘e6 limits the damage, e.g. 14.♕d3 g6 15.♘xd6 ♕xd6 16.♘e4 ♘c5 17.♘xc5 ♕xc5 18.♗h6 ♖d8 19.♕g3, but White is still well on top.

14.♗xf4 ♗xb3

14...♗xf4 15.♕h5 h6 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♘c5 ♕g5 18.♕xg5 ♗xg5 19.♗xe6+ ♔h7 20.♗d5+–.

15.♕d3!

White's point, which Black had probably missed.

15...f6 16.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 17.♕xh7+ ♔f8 18.axb3 ♖h6 19.♕f5+ ♕f6 20.♗xd6+ cxd6 21.♘h7+

1-0

Black must often be very careful with a direct ...d7-d5 as White's initiative can be very dangerous in the resulting open position:

Sergey Movsesian 2677
Erwin l'Ami 2581
Wijk aan Zee 2008 (12)
1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗c5 5.c3 0-0 6.0-0 a6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♖e1 h6

8...♘g4 can be met by 9.d4.

9.h3 ♖e8 10.♘bd2

10...d5?

10...d6 is called for.

11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.d4!

This typical counterstrike wins a valuable pawn.

12...♗f5

12...exd4? 13.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 14.♗xd5 and White wins.

13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5

The computer even prefers 14.dxe5 ♕h4 15.♕f3 ♘f4 16.♔h2 ♗g6 17.♘e4 ♘e6 18.g3 ♕e7 19.♗e3±.

14...♖xe5 15.dxe5 ♕h4 16.♕f3 ♗e6 17.♘e4 ♖d8 18.♗c2 b5 19.♗d2 a5 20.a3 ♗b6 21.♖e1 ♘e7 22.♗f4 ♘g6 23.♗g3 ♕e7

24.♘f6+!!

The knight opens the gates.

24...gxf6

24...♔h8 25.♕h5+–.

25.exf6 ♕e8 26.♕h5 c6 27.♗f4 ♗xf2+

27...♘xf4 28.♕xh6 ♗xf2+ 29.♔h1+–.

28.♔xf2 ♘xf4 29.♕xh6 ♖d2+ 30.♔e3

The king can even enter open territory, so Black resigned.

Often only one black mistake on the kingside can lead to disaster:

Michael Oratovsky 2491
Ronen Lev 2448
Israel tt 2000 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♘bd2 a6 7.♗b3 0-0 8.h3 d5

This is seldom seen as Black loses a tempo compared to the lines where ...d7-d5 is played in one move. But as h2-h3 is not so aggressive, it is interesting.
8...♗a7 and 8...♗e6 are the main moves.

9.exd5

9.0-0 is the alternative.

9...♘xd5 10.0-0 ♗a7

10...♘f4?! 11.♘e4 ♘xd3? runs into 12.♘fg5 ♘xc1 (12...h6? 13.♕h5+–) 13.♕h5 ♗f5 14.♗xf7+ ♔h8 15.♖axc1±.

11.♘e4

The usual knight route, which we have often recommended in our repertoire. The alternative 11.♘c4 is played more often in this position, e.g. 11...f6 12.♘e3 ♗e6 13.♘xd5 ♗xd5 14.♗e3 ♔h8 15.♗xa7 ♖xa7 (Velicka-Sarkozy, Prague 1992) 16.d4!?N ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 exd4 18.♖ad1±.

11...♔h8

11...♗e6 12.♘fg5 ♕d7 13.♘xe6 ♕xe6 (Andriasyan-Anton, Kazan tt 2013) 14.♕f3N ♘ce7 (14...♖ad8 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.fxe3±) 15.♗d2 c6 16.♖ae1±.

12.♖e1

12...f5?

A typical mistake, after which Black can no longer close the inroads. 12...f6 was called for, e.g. 13.d4 exd4 14.cxd4 ♖e8 (Lukacs in CBM 77) 15.♘c3 ♖xe1+ 16.♕xe1 ♘ce7 17.♗d2 ♕g8 18.♕e4 with a very slight white initiative.

13.♘eg5! f4

A) 13...♕d6 14.d4! e4 (14...exd4 15.♖e8!+–) 15.♘e5 ♔g8 16.♕h5 h6 17.♘gf7 ♕e6

18.♘xh6+! gxh6 19.♗xh6+– (Lukacs);

B) 13...h6 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 (14...hxg5? 15.♕h5+ ♔g8 16.♘g6 ♖f6 17.♗xd5+ ♕xd5 18.♕h8+ ♔f7 19.♕e8#) 15.♖xe5 c6 16.♘f3+–.

14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♖xe5 c6

15...♗f5 16.♕h5 ♗g6 17.♕f3+– (Lukacs).

16.♕h5 h6 17.♘f7+ ♖xf7 18.♕xf7 ♗xf2+ 19.♔xf2 ♕h4+ 20.♔g1 ♗xh3 21.♗xd5

1-0

White's initiative can also be played mainly on the queenside:

Evgeny Kalegin 2431
Swietlana Miednikova 2180
Yerevan Ech-sr 2016 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 ♗a7 7.a4 0-0 8.♘a3 d6 9.h3 ♗e6 10.♗g5 ♕e7 11.♖e1 h6 12.♗e3

12.♗h4!? is more critical.

12...♗xe3 13.♖xe3

13...♘d7?

This gives White a free hand in the centre. Better are 13...♖fe8 14.♕c2 d5 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♖ae1 f6 18.d4 ♗xf3 19.♖xf3 ♕f7 20.dxe5 ♖xe5 21.♖fe3= and 13...♗xc4 14.♘xc4 d5 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♖e1 f6 17.d4 ♘f4=.

14.d4! ♗xc4 15.♘xc4 b5 16.♘cd2 ♖ab8 17.axb5 axb5

18.♕f1?

18.d5 ♘d8 19.♖a5 gives White the better game due to the queenside play.

18...f5?

This just weakens Black as there is no real play on the kingside. 18…exd4 19.cxd4 ♘b4! 20.♖b3 c5 21.♖a5 d5 gives Black enough counterplay.

19.exf5 ♖xf5 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.♖a6 ♘d8

22.b4!?

A typical way to blockade the queenside and limit Black's play there.

22...c5?!

This only weakens Black. 22…♖f6 23.♖a5 ♖fb6 24.♕e2 ♕f7 25.♘e4 ♘e6 26.g3±.

23.♕d3 ♖f7 24.♖d6 cxb4 25.cxb4 ♘b7?! 26.♖d5 ♘f6 27.♖xb5 ♖d8 28.♖xb7

28.♕b3+– is even stronger.

28...♖xd3 29.♖xe7 ♖xd2 30.♖xf7 ♖d1+ 31.♔h2 ♔xf7 32.♘xe5+ ♔e6 33.♘g4+ ♔f7 34.♘xf6 gxf6 35.♖b3 ♖d6 36.b5 ♖b6 37.♔g3 ♔e6 38.♔f4 f5 39.♖e3+ ♔d7 40.♖e5 ♖g6 41.g3 1-0

Sometimes White can even just push the queenside pawns:

Zoltan Almasi 2691
Pentala Harikrishna 2668
Reggio Emilia 2007 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 ♗e6 8.♘c3!?

This alternative to 8.♘bd2 comes strongly into consideration. White controls the square d5. One plan is expansion on the queenside.

8...♕d7

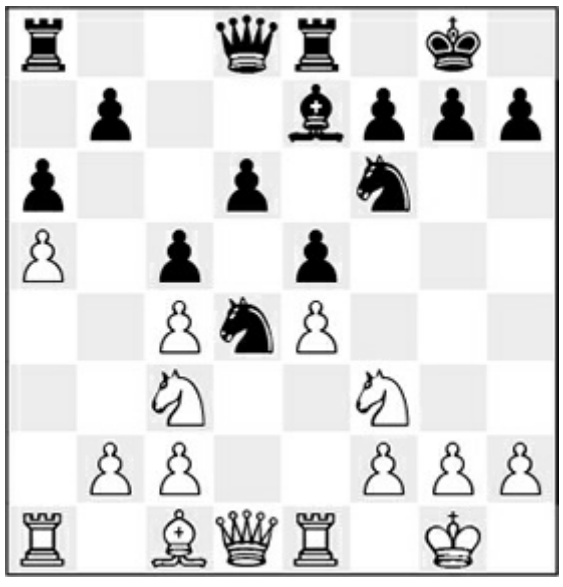
A) **8...♗xc4!? 9.dxc4** This kind of structure is usually more comfortable for White:

A1) **9...h6 10.h3** 10.a5N a6 11.b3±. **10...♘h7?!** 10…a5N is better. **11.♘d5 f5?!** This

activity is not positionally justified. **12.exf5 ♖xf5 13.♗e3 ♔h8 14.a5 ♕d7 15.b4±** Yudin-Gorbatov, Moscow 2007;

A2) **9...a5! 10.♗g5** 10.♘d5N ♘d7 11.♗e3 is a bit more pleasant for White. **10...♘d7! 11.♗e3** (Brkic-Ivanov, Skopje 2016) **11...♘b4!N 12.b3 ♘a6 13.♕d2 ♘ac5=**

B) **8...♖e8 9.a5 a6 10.♘g5 ♗xc4 11.dxc4 ♘d4 12.♘f3 c5** 12...♘e6N 13.h3 c6 14.♗e3±.



analysis diagram

13.♗g5! ♘d7 (Howell-Webb, England tt 2007/08) **14.♗xe7N ♖xe7 15.♘d5 ♖e8 16.c3±**;

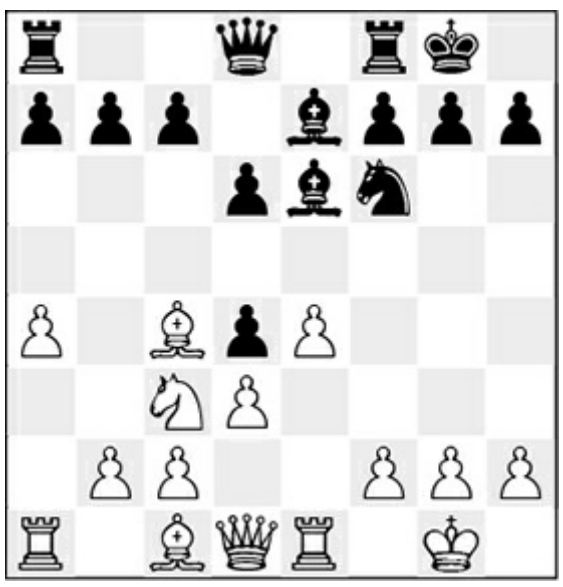
C) 8...♘a5?! (Brkic-Klovans, Pardubice 2008) 9.♗xe6N fxe6 10.b4 with the initiative;

D) **8...♘d7 9.a5 a6** 9...♘c5 10.♘d5 ♔h8?! Shimanov-Chan Yi Ren, Kirishi jr 2009. **11.c3N a6 12.d4±. 10.♘d5 ♗g4?!** 10...♘d4N 11.c3 ♘xf3+ 12.♕xf3 c6 13.b4!?±. **11.c3 ♔h8** (Badmatsyrenov-Tuvshintugs, Ulaanbaatar 2011) **12.h3!N ♗h5 13.b4± f5? 14.exf5 ♖xf5 15.g4+–**;

E) **8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗h5 10.♘d5** 10.a5N a6 (10...♘d4?! 11.g4±) 11.♗e3 looks a bit better for White; 11.♘b1!? is a funny engine suggestion to regroup again. **10...♘xd5 11.♗xd5 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘d4 13.♕d1 c6 14.♗a2 ♗g5 15.c3 ♗xc1 16.♖xc1 ♘e6** (Marciano-Ermeni, Switzerland tt 2012), and now **17.d4N** is slightly more preferable for White as the bishop should count for a bit more than the knight;

F) **8...h6 9.a5 a6 10.♘d5** 10.h3!? ♘xe4!? (10...♕d7 transposes to the main game) 11.♖xe4 d5 12.♘xe5 dxe4 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♘xe4 ♕d5 (Saric-Gajewski, Warsaw rapid 2008) 16.b3!N ♕e5 17.♖a4 with very nice compensation for White. **10...♖e8** 10...♗xd5N 11.exd5 ♘b4 12.c3 ♘bxd5 13.♕b3 c6 14.♕xb7 ♕e8 15.♕b3±. **11.c3 ♗f8 12.♕b3 ♖b8** (Mestre Bellido-Bacallao, Barbera del Valles 2009) **13.♗e3N** and White has nice control of the situation;

G) 8...♘d4. Black needs to prepare this sortie. 9.♘xd4 exd4 (Wei Yi-Bu Xiangzhi, Shenzhen rapid 2014)



analysis diagram

10.♗xe6!N fxe6 11.♘e2 c5 12.c3 dxc3 13.bxc3±.

9.a5

9.♘d5 may be more precise as it seems that Black has problems equalising: **9...♗xd5** 9...♘d4 (Zambrana-Trois, Santa Cruz 2008) 10.♘xd4!N exd4 11.♘f4 ♗xc4 12.dxc4 c5 13.b3± . **10.exd5 ♘b4 11.d4 e4** 11...exd4N 12.♘xd4 ♘bxd5 13.♕f3 c6 14.♘f5 ♖fe8 15.b3 ♗f8 16.♗b2, with nice compensation for the pawn, is a position worth testing. **12.♘d2 ♕f5** (Malushko-Globa, ICCF email 2011) **13.♘f1!N ♘bxd5 14.♘g3 ♕d7 15.♘xe4±**.

9...a6

9...♘d4!? works better now: 10.h3 (10.♘xd4N exd4 11.♘e2 c5 12.♘f4 ♗xc4 13.dxc4 is different in comparison to the same line after 9.♘d5 as Black can now play 13...b5!=) 10...♘xf3+ 11.♕xf3 c6 12.♗g5 (12.♕e3!?N with the idea to prevent 12...b5 is a fresh idea here) 12...b5! 13.axb6 axb6= Saric-Postny, Croatia tt 2009.

10.h3 h6

This is probably too timid.

A) **10...♖ae8** seems more precise as it is favourable for Black in some lines to have this rook on e8 as soon as possible. **11.♘d5** 11.♗d2N is better in order to control the square b4 before playing ♘d5. **11...♗xd5 12.♗xd5** 12.exd5?!N ♘b4! and Black is OK, as 13.d4 exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘bxd5 15.♕f3 doesn't work here because of 15...♗d8! and Black is at least equal. **12...♘xd5 13.exd5 ♘d4 14.♘xd4 exd4=** Codenotti-Beliavsky, Yerevan Ech 2014;

B) **10...♘d4 11.♘g5!?** 11.♘xd4N exd4 12.♗xe6!? fxe6 13.♘e2 e5 14.c3 c5 15.♗d2 looks a bit better for White. **11...♗xc4** It's not clear that Black really has to take on c4. **12.dxc4 h6 13.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 14.♕xf3 c6 15.♖d1 ♕e6 16.b3±** Malakhov-Tomashevsky, Tomsk ch-RUS 2006. This is typically a slightly more pleasant structure for White due to his space advantage.

11.♗d2

11.♘d5 looks very strong too. **11...♘d4** 11...♗xd5 12.exd5 ♘b4N (12...♘b8?! 13.d4 e4 14.♘d2± Narayanan-Ayrapetyan, ICC INT 2009) 13.d4! exd4 14.♘xd4 ♖fe8 (14...♘bxd5?! is even losing in this concrete situation after 15.♕f3! c6 16.♗xh6!+– △ gxh6 17.♘f5 ♔h8 18.♘xe7+–) 15.♕f3±. **12.♘xd4 exd4** (Velikic-Vidic, Halkidiki jr 2015) **13.♘f4!N ♗xc4 14.dxc4 c5 15.♕d3 ♖ae8 16.♗d2±** is a very good version of the same theme we had before.

11...♖ae8 12.♘d5 ♗d8

12...♗xd5N 13.exd5 ♘d4 14.♘xd4 exd4 15.c3 dxc3 16.bxc3±.

13.♗b3!±

The regrouping of the bishop to a4 is a very strong idea and secures White a small advantage.

13...♘h7 14.♗a4 ♕c8 15.b4

15.♘b4!?N ♗d7 16.♘xc6 bxc6 17.b4± is another logical way to proceed.

15...f5

15...♗d7 16.c4 ♘e7 17.♗xd7 ♕xd7 (David-Buhmann, France tt 2014) 18.♕b3!N ♘xd5 19.cxd5 ♘g5 20.♗xg5 ♗xg5 21.♖ab1±.

16.c4

The direct **16.b5!** is better, giving White an excellent position and representing the culmination of his strategy:

analysis diagram

16...axb5 17.♗xb5 18.a6 is an annoying threat now. **17...fxe4 18.dxe4**

A) 18...♖xf3?! 19.♕xf3 ♘d4 20.♕d3 ♘xb5 21.♕xb5 c6 22.♕a4 ♖f8 23.♘b6 ♕c7± (Yilmaz-Khoroshev, Halkidiki jr 2010). Black simply doesn't have enough compensation for the exchange;

B) **18...♗xh3!N** is a better try. White has to play very accurately. Check the lines yourself. White seems clearly better. **19.♖e3!** 19.gxh3 ♕xh3 leads to a draw after 20.♖a3 (20.♘h2? ♖xf2! 21.♔xf2 ♕xh2+–+) 20...♕g4+ 21.♔f1 ♕h3+ 22.♔g1; 22.♔e2?? ♖xf3!–+. **19...♗g4** 19...♗e6 20.a6 ♘a7 21.♗xe8 ♖xe8 22.axb7 ♕xb7 23.♖b3+–; 19...♖xf3 20.♖xf3 ♗g4 21.a6 ♗xf3 22.♕xf3 ♘d4 23.♕h5 ♖f8 24.a7+–. **20.a6!** ♘**g5 21.♖b3**:

B1) 21...♖xf3 22.gxf3 ♘xf3+ 23.♖xf3 ♘d4 24.♘b6!! cxb6 25.♖c3 ♕xc3 26.♗xc3 ♗xd1 27.♗xd4+–;

B2) **21...♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♘d4 23.♗xg5 ♘xb5** 23...♗xg5 24.♗xe8 ♘xb3 25.cxb3 ♖xe8

26.a7+–. **24.a7! ♘xa7 25.♗xd8+–**;

B3) 21…♘d4 22.♗xg5 ♘xb3 23.cxb3 c6 24.axb7 ♕xb7 25.♗xc6! ♕xc6 26.♗xd8±.

There are several ways now to proceed for White.

16...♗d7?!

16…fxe4!N 17.♖xe4 is only slightly better for White, but it's complicated, e.g. (17.dxe4?! runs into 17…♗xh3! 18.gxh3 ♕xh3 and Black has enough for a draw, e.g. 19.♖e3 ♖e6 20.♘g5 ♕h4 21.♘xe6 ♕xf2+ 22.♔h1 ♕h4+ 23.♔g1 ♕f2+=) 17…♗f5 18.b5 ♗xe4 19.dxe4 ♘b8 20.bxa6 ♘xa6 21.♗xe8 ♖xe8 22.♗e3 c6 23.♘b6±.

17.b5± ♘e7

17…fxe4N 18.bxc6 bxc6 19.dxe4 cxd5 20.♗xd7 ♕xd7 21.cxd5±.

18.♕b3 axb5

18…fxe4N 19.dxe4 ♔h8 20.♘h4±.

19.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 20.cxb5+ ♖ef7?!

20…♗e6N 21.♕a3±.

21.a6

White has a winning position now with his advanced pawns on the queenside, while Black has no real threats on the other side. The rest is technique.

21...fxe4 22.dxe4 ♔h8 23.a7! ♕a8 24.b6! c6

24…cxb6N 25.♗xd7 ♖xd7 26.♖ec1+–.

25.♖e3 ♘f6 26.♖d1 ♗e8 27.♗a5 ♖d7 28.♕a3 ♗e7 29.♗b4 c5 30.♗a5 ♖d8 31.♗xe8 ♖fxe8 32.♘h4 ♔h7 33.♕b3 ♗f8 34.♕f7

It's interesting that White decides the game on the kingside in the end.

34...♕c8 35.♖f3 ♖d7 36.♕g6+ ♔h8 37.♗d2 d5 38.♖xf6! gxf6 39.♖a1 dxe4 40.a8♕

1-0

Often it is a fight for the light squares in the centre:

Viorel Iordachescu 2648
Ivan Saric 2648
Halkidiki Ech tt 2011 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 ♘a5 8.♗a2 c5 9.c3 ♘c6 10.♘bd2

10.♘a3 is our recommended move order. After 10…♗e6 11.♘c4 we transpose to this game. Regarding our recommended move 11.♗xe6, see Chapter 3.

10...♗e6 11.♘c4 h6

This seems necessary to avoid 12.♘g5. 11...♖e8?! allows 12.♘g5, e.g. 12...♕d7 13.♘xe6 fxe6 14.f4!? ♔h8?! (14...exf4 15.♗xf4±) 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.♕e2 ♖ad8 17.♖d1 ♖f8 18.♗e3 ± Adhiban-Pähtz, Wijk aan Zee 2012.

12.♗d2

A) **12.♘e3 ♖e8** 12...♗xa2!?N. **13.♘d5** 13.♗xe6N and 13.♗d5N come into consideration. **13...♕d7 14.♗d2 ♗d8 15.♗c4 a6 16.♕b3 ♗g4 17.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18.♕d1=** Saric-Lenic, Croatia tt 2006;

B) **12.h3** is probably the best try. White controls the square g4 and also prepares ♘h2 just in case. **12...♖e8 13.♗d2 a6** 13...♗f8 14.♕b1 ♕c7 (14...a6 15.♘e3 ♕d7 16.♗xe6 fxe6 17.♘c4 ♕f7 (Demchenko-Sriram, New Delhi 2016) 18.b4N cxb4 19.cxb4 b5 20.axb5 axb5 21.♘a5±) 15.♘e3 ♖ad8 16.♗xe6 fxe6 17.b4 cxb4 18.cxb4 ♕f7 (Atlas-Pavasovic, Baden 2010) 19.♕b2N ♘e7 20.♘c4 ♘g6 21.b5±. **14.♗b1?!** A strange move. 14.♕b1 ♗f8 leads to Udeshi-Panchanathan, which we mentioned in Chapter 3. Black equalises after 15.b4 b5 16.♘e3 ♗xa2 17.♖xa2 cxb4 18.cxb4 bxa4!=. **14...♗f8 15.♘e3 g6 16.c4 a5 17.♘d5 ♗g7 18.♔h2 ♖f8 19.♕c1 ♔h7 20.♘xf6+?! ♕xf6∓** Zambrana-Bruzon, Santa Clara 2004.

12...a5

It's interesting to see how one of the main advocates of this opening handles the position with black. 12...a5 controls the square b4, but on the other hand White may be able to control the light squares.

A) **12...♖e8 13.b4** 13.♕b1 ♕d7 (Krnan-Mazur, Slovakia tt 2014/15; after 13...♗g4!?N, White has probably nothing better than to repeat moves either with 14.♕d1 or 14.♘h4 ♗e6 15.♘f3. So 13.♕b1 has virtually no independent significance) 14.b4N cxb4 15.cxb4±; 13.h3 transposes to 12.h3. **13...cxb4** 13...♗f8?! 14.b5 ♘e7 (Fedorchuk-Das, Pamplona

2011) 15.♘e3N ♗xa2 16.♖xa2 ♘g6 17.c4±. **14.cxb4 d5! 15.exd5** (Ledger-Hebden, Ascot 2013) **15...♗xd5!?N 16.b5 ♘d4 17.♘fxe5** 17.♘cxe5 ♘xf3+ 18.♘xf3 ♗xa2 19.♖xa2 ♕xd3=. **17...♗c5∞**;

B) **12...a6** A good move, preparing ...b7-b5. **13.♕b1** 13.b4 b5 14.♘e3 (Harikrishna-Yang Kaiqi, China tt 2012) was mentioned in Chapter 3. Black can equalise with 14...cxb4!N 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.cxb4 ♕d7=; 13.h3N b5 14.♘e3 ♕d7 15.♗d5 looks sensible here. **13...b5** 13...♗g4!?N. **14.♘e3 ♖e8** 14...♕d7N just seems equal. **15.b4 cxb4 16.cxb4 ♗f8** (Piscopo-Malaniuk, Milan 2009) **17.♗b3!?N ♕d7 18.♕a2 ♖ad8=**.

13.♘e3 ♕d7 14.♘d5

14.♗d5!?N looks better for White as he has a grip on the light squares.

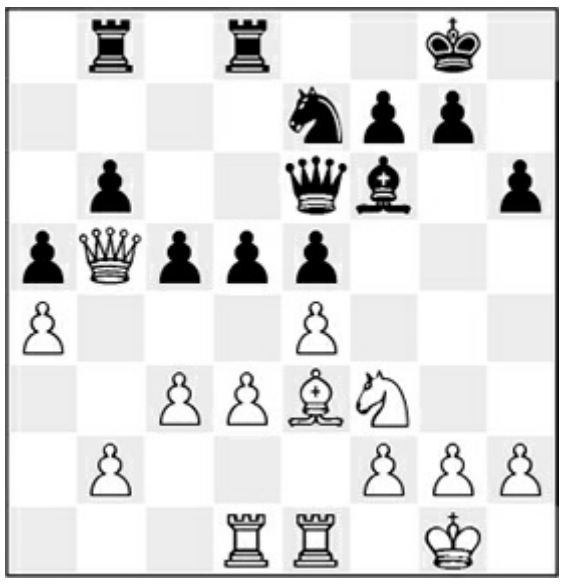
14...♗d8 15.♘xf6+

This releases the pressure. 15.♗c4!?N ♗xd5 16.exd5 ♘e7 17.♕b3, with a grip on the light squares, seems a bit better for White; 17.♗b5 ♕f5 18.♘h4 ♕h5 19.♕xh5 ♘xh5 20.d4 looks interesting as White gets some compensation if Black takes the pawn.

15...♗xf6 16.♗e3 ♖ab8 17.♗c4 b6 18.♕b3 ♘e7 19.♕b5 ♕c8 20.♖ac1 ♖d8 21.♗xe6

21.d4N ♗xc4 22.♕xc4 exd4 23.cxd4 d5! is equal but slightly annoying for White.

21...♕xe6 22.♖cd1 d5



Now Black should have taken over.

23.♗c1 ♖d6

23...♘g6N 24.♕b3 ♕c6∓.

24.d4 cxd4 25.cxd4 ♖bd8?!

25...dxe4N 26.♖xe4 ♘c6 27.♖de1 ♖d5 28.♕b3 b5 29.dxe5 ♖xe5 30.♕xe6 ♖xe6 31.♖xe6 fxe6 32.axb5 ♘d8=.

26.dxe5 ♗xe5 27.♘xe5

27.exd5!N ♖xd5 28.♖xd5 ♖xd5 29.♕e8+ ♔h7 30.♗f4 f6 31.h4±.

27...♕xe5 28.g3 ♘g6?

28...♕e6!N 29.♗f4 ♖c6 30.exd5 ♖xd5! 31.♖xe6 ♖xd1+ 32.♔g2 fxe6∞.

29.f4 ♕e8 30.e5

30.♕xe8+!N ♖xe8 31.e5 ♖d7 32.♖e3±.

30...♕xb5 31.axb5 ♖6d7 32.f5

32.e6N ♖b7 33.exf7+ ♔xf7 34.♗e3±.

32...♘e7 33.g4

33.e6N ♖b7 34.g4=.

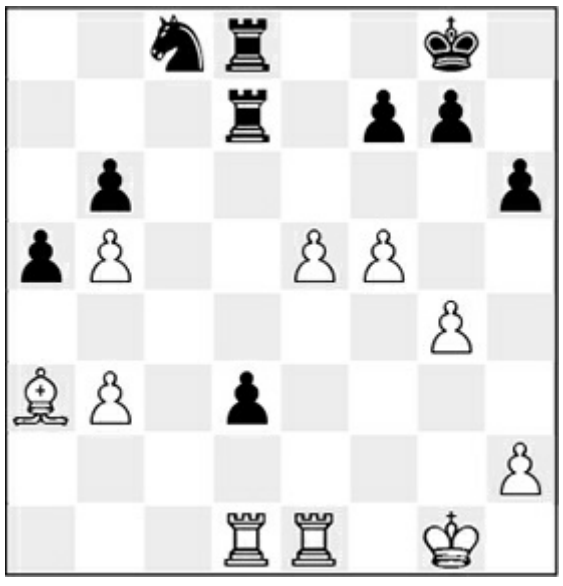
33...d4 34.b3?!

34.e6N ♖d5 35.♖e4 d3 36.b3 ♘c8 37.♗e3 fxe6 38.fxe6 ♖xb5 39.e7 ♖e8 40.♖xd3 ♖xe7∓.

34...d3

34...♖d5N 35.♗a3 ♘c8 36.e6 fxe6 37.fxe6 ♖e8 38.e7 ♘d6 39.♗xd6 ♖xd6 40.♖e4 d3 41.♖e3 d2 42.♖e2 ♖d4!∓.

35.♗a3 ♘c8



36.♔f2

36.e6!N fxe6 37.fxe6 ♖d5 38.♖e3 d2 39.♖e2 ♖d3 40.♖f2! ♖xb3 41.e7 ♘xe7 42.♗xe7 ♖d4 43.♖fxd2 ♖xg4+ 44.♖g2 ♖xg2+ 45.♔xg2 ♖xb5=.

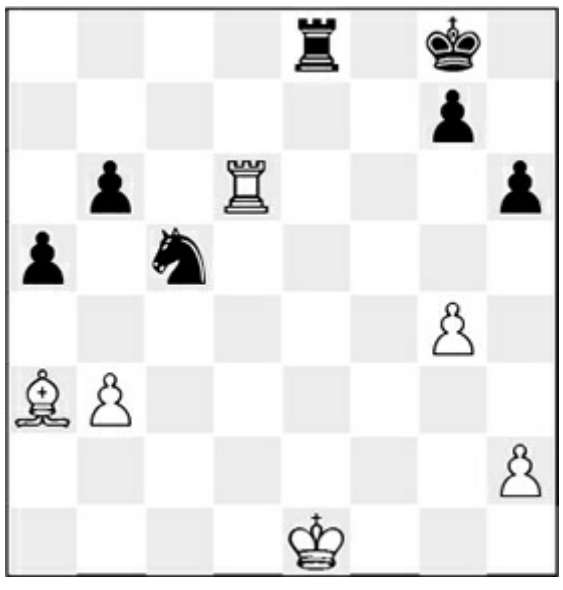
36...♘a7 37.e6 fxe6 38.fxe6 ♖d5 39.♖e3 ♘xb5 40.♗b2 ♖f8+

40...d2N 41.♖e2 ♘d6 42.♔f3 ♖d3+ 43.♖e3 ♘e8∓.

41.♔e1 ♘c7 42.♖dxd3?!

42.♗a3N ♖e8 43.e7 ♘b5 44.♗b2 ♘a7!? 45.♖dxd3 ♖xd3 46.♖xd3 ♖xe7+∓.

42...♖xd3 43.♖xd3 ♘xe6 44.♖d6 ♘c5 45.♗a3 ♖e8+



46.♔f1?

An oversight as Black can liquidate into a won rook endgame. 46.♔d1N ♘xb3 47.♖xb6∓.

46...♘xb3 47.♖xb6 ♘d2+ 48.♔f2 ♘c4 49.♖b3 a4 50.♖c3 ♘xa3 51.♖xa3 ♖a8–+ 52.♔e3 ♔f7 53.♔d4 ♔g6 54.♔c3 ♔g5 55.♔b4 ♔xg4 56.♖g3+ ♔h4 57.♖xg7 a3

0-1

White's initiative is also in the centre and on the queenside in the following examples, but sometimes he can shift to the kingside:

Rustam Kasimdzhanov 2640
Surya Shekhar Ganguly 2574
Pune 2004 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 a6 7.♗b3 ♗a7

8.♗e3 0-0 9.♘bd2 ♖e8 10.♗xa7 ♖xa7 11.♘c4 ♘h5 12.♘e3 ♗e6 13.♗xe6 ♖xe6

14.d4

The typical central advance. The alternative is queenside play with 14.b4 ♘f6 15.a4.

The direct 14.♘xe5?! is too rushed due to 14...♘xe5 15.♕xh5 ♘xd3, which is almost equal.

14...exd4 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.cxd4 ♘f6 17.f3

This stabilises White's centre very well.

17...c6 18.♕d2 ♕b6?! 19.♖ac1 a5 20.♖fd1 a4 21.♔h1

21...g6?

This runs into a nice refutation. After 21...♖a8 White can shift his attention to the kingside with 22.g4 h6 23.♘f5±.

22.d5! ♖e7

22...cxd5 23.♖c8+ ♔g7? 24.♘f5+ gxf5 25.♕g5#.

23.♘c4 ♕d8 24.♕d4

Black resigned.

A deadly double attack (see diagram next column).

In the next case White again plays first on the queenside and in the centre, and later on the kingside:

Vladislav Nevednichy 2546
Stelios Halkias 2541
Alba Iulia 2016 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 d6

Black postpones castling, but as mentioned in Chapter 3 it is not clear why he should do that, as it mainly gives White additional options.

6.a4

Of course we have to parry the threat 6...♘a5, but a2-a4 is a move we want to play with white anyway.

6...♘a5

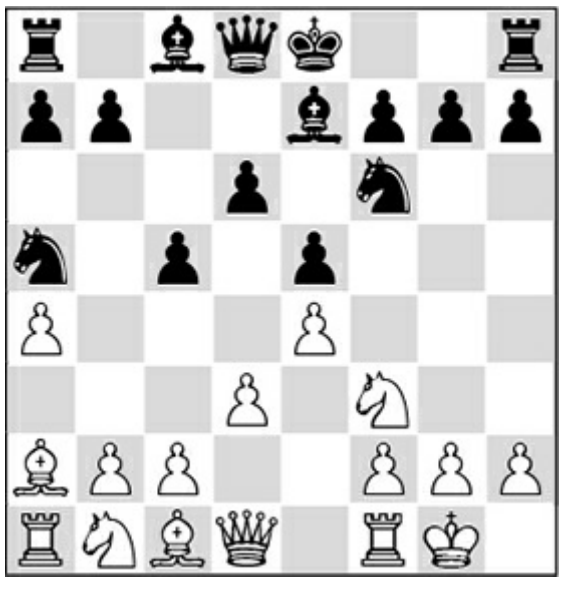
This seems to have independent significance only if White deviates from the main line, as after 6...♗e6 or 6...♗g4 there is hardly scope to deviate for both sides. 6...0-0 7.♖e1 leads to the main line in Chapter 3. 7.a5!? is an important additional option for White (!), which we discuss in the next game, Howell-Sowray.

A) 6...♗e6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♖e1 leads to 7...♗e6 in Chapter 3;

B) 6...♗g4 7.c3 0-0 8.h3 ♗h5 9.♖e1 leads to 7...♗g4 in Chapter 3.

7.♗a2 c5

After 7...♗e6?! in A.Muzychuk-Batchimeg, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014, White could have seized the initiative immediately with 8.♗xe6!N fxe6 9.b4 ♘c6 10.b5 ♘b8 (10...♘d4? 11.♘e1, with c2-c3 coming, is winning a piece) 11.♘g5 ♕d7 12.♕f3 h6 13.♕h3±.



8.♗d2

A) 8.c3 ♘c6 9.♖e1 0-0 10.♘a3 transposes to the main line in Chapter 3, and we don't see a reason why White should deviate;

B) 8.♘g5?! was a failed try to punish Black for the unusual move order: 8…0-0 9.f4 exf4 10.♗xf4 ♘c6 11.♘c3 h6 12.♘f3 ♗e6= Daulyte-Yildiz, Chakvi Ech W 2015;

C) 8.♘c3 is an idea to bring the knight to d5. It is also possible in the main line in Chapter 3, but it leads out of our suggested repertoire.

8...♘c6 9.♘c3

9.♘a3N might transpose to the main line.

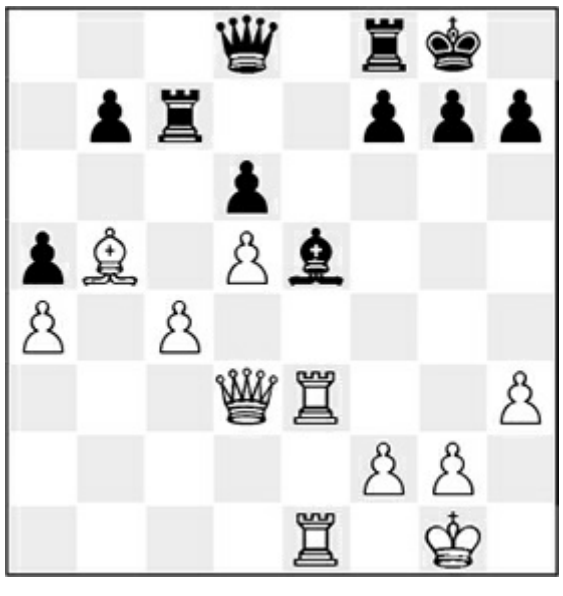
9...0-0 10.h3 ♗e6 11.♘d5 ♗xd5 12.exd5 ♘b4

This is just equal. 12…♘d4N 13.♘h2!?, with the idea 14.c3 or 14.b4, gives White a small edge.

13.♗xb4 cxb4 14.♗c4

14.d4 ♘d7! 15.♕e1 a5 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 dxe5 18.♕xe5 (Movsesian-Postny, Plovdiv tt 2010) 18…♗f6N 19.♕f4 ♗xb2=.

14...a5 15.c3 bxc3 16.bxc3 e4 17.dxe4 ♘xe4 18.♕c2 ♘c5 19.♖fe1 ♗f6 20.♗b5 ♖c8 21.♖e3 ♘d7 22.♖ae1 ♘e5 23.♘xe5 ♗xe5 24.c4 ♖c7 25.♕d3



White is pressing without any risk, but objectively it should be a draw due to the opposite-coloured bishops.

25...♖c5?

There is the mistake. 25…f5!N is equal.

25...♖c5 26.g3?!

But White fails to exploit it. 26.f4! ♖xb5 (26…♗xf4?? 27.♖e8+–) 27.cxb5 ♗xf4 28.♖e4± would have won the exchange.

26...g6 27.♔g2 h5 28.f4 ♗g7 29.f5

This is a bit better for White but it's very difficult to make serious progress.

29...♕f6 30.♖f1 g5 31.♕e2 ♖c7

31...♕b2 32.♕xb2 ♗xb2 33.♖e7 ♔g7 34.♖xb7 ♖cc8±.

32.♕xh5

Even with an extra pawn it's difficult to win the game, but at least Black has to suffer.

32...♖e7 33.♕e2 ♖xe3 34.♕xe3 ♖c8 35.♕b6

35.♖f2± could be a better try.

35...♕e7 36.♖f3

White should probably not allow the queen exchange.

36...♕e2+ 37.♕f2

37.♖f2? ♕e4+ 38.♔h2 ♗d4 39.♕xb7 ♖f8 40.♖g2 ♔g7∓ and Black gets too much counterplay.

37...♕xf2+ 38.♖xf2

White presses for another 30 moves, but the draw seems inevitable.

38...♗d4 39.♖e2 ♖c7 40.♖e8+ ♔g7 41.♔f3 ♔f6 42.♔g4 b6 43.♖h8 ♗e3 44.♖d8 ♗c5 45.♖e8 ♗f2 46.♖e2 ♗d4 47.♗c6 ♖c8 48.♖e4 ♗e5 49.♖e1 ♖g8 50.♗b5 ♖h8 51.♖b1 ♗d4 52.♗c6 ♖g8 53.♖f1 ♗e5 54.♗b5 ♖c8 55.♔f3 ♖h8 56.♔g2 ♖g8 57.g4 ♖c8 58.♗c6 ♖d8 59.♔f3 ♖h8 60.♖h1 ♗d4 61.♔e4 ♗c5 62.♗b5 ♖h7 63.♔f3 ♗d4 64.♔g2 ♖h8 65.♗c6 ♗e5 66.♗b5 ♗c3 67.♖b1 ♗d4 68.♖h1

½-½

David Howell 2693
Peter Sowray 2349
England tt 2015-16 (10)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0

5…d6 6.a4 0-0 7.a5!? is the move order that leads to the position analysed after 6…d6 in this game. As mentioned in Chapter 3, White can only force this line if Black chooses 5…d6 6.a4 0-0. Of course White can play 7.♖e1 with transposition to Chapter 3.

6.a4!?

This is an interesting try to bedazzle Black and get a better version of the main line with 6.♖e1.

6...d5!

This must be the critical answer. After **6…d6** White can continue with **7.a5!?** (7.♖e1 leads to the main line in Chapter 3) and only after **7…a6** with **8.♖e1**. This seems like a better version of the main line as it avoids 7…♘a5 and 7…a5, and the inclusion of a4-a5 and …a7-a6 should favour White in most of the cases. Apart from that it should lead via transposition to positions we analysed in Chapter 3.

analysis diagram

A) 8…h6 9.c3 ♘h7 10.♘bd2 leads to a position we analysed in Chapter 3 after the move 7…h6;

B) 8…♗g4 9.h3 leads to a position we analysed in Chapter 3 after the move 7…♗g4, only with the inclusion of a4-a5 and …a7-a6, which should favour White!;

C) **8…b5?!** is of independent significance, but is obviously a dubious move as it weakens the black structure. **9.axb6 cxb6 10.♘c3 ♘b4** (Perez Garcia-Galego, Spain tt 2003) **11.♗b3N** 11.d4!?N ♗g4 12.♗b3!? ♘c6 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♗f4 ♘xf3+ 15.gxf3 ♗e6 16.♘d5±. **11…♗e6 12.♗xe6 fxe6 13.d4 exd4 14.♘xd4 ♕d7 15.f3±**;

D) 8…♔h8 9.h3! leads to a position we analysed in Chapter 3 after the move 7…♔h8;

E) 8…♗e6 9.♘bd2 leads to a position we analysed in Chapter 3 after the move 7…♗e6, again here with the inclusion of a4-a5 and …a7-a6. This is the only case where the inclusion of these moves doesn't favour White, because in Chapter 3 we pointed out White's possibility of playing b4-b5 with tempo. This is not possible here. Overall, 8…♗e6 could be the best black try. You have to consider this if you are entering this line with White.

7.exd5 ♘xd5

8.a5!?

A very nice idea by David Howell – the other two games mentioned later arose via a different move order.

Before attacking the pawn on e5 White gains more space at the queenside, sets up the positional threat 9.a6, and furthermore controls the square b6 in order to prevent …♘b6, an important counterattack in many lines for Black.

But there is a small hidden difference in comparison to 8.♖e1. The pawn on a5 serves Black in some lines as an attacking point.

After 8.♖e1 we have:

analysis diagram

A) 8...♗f6?! 9.♘bd2 ♘f4 10.♘e4 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗h5 (Souleidis-Pitselis, Greece tt 2004) leads to the same position as in the main game with the only difference that the pawns here are on a4 and a7. White is clearly better after 12.c3N;

B) **8...♗g4!**:

B1) **9.c3** wasn't enough for an advantage in the following correspondence game: **9...a5!?** 9...♗xf3?! doesn't work here because White can preserve his light-squared bishop after 10.♕xf3 ♘b6 11.♗b3±. **10.♘bd2 ♘b6 11.♗b5 f6 12.♘c4** 12.h3N ♗h5 13.♘f1 ♘a7!=. **12...♘xc4 13.♗xc4+ ♔h8=** Semmler-Schulz, ICCF email 2014. After the exchange of one knight, the pin is very annoying;

B2) **9.h3 ♗xf3!** 9...♗h5 10.g4 ♗g6 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♖xe5 c6 13.♕f3± Antoniewski-Sriram, Marrakesh 2010. As a rule of thumb, White can grab the pawn on e5 as long as he hasn't played c2-c3, because the possibility of playing ♘c3 is very important in this structure. With the pawn on c3 White has problems coordinating and developing his pieces smoothly. **10.♕xf3 ♘b6!** This is a reason to play 8.a5!? as Howell did. Now White cannot avoid the exchange of his light-squared bishop. **11.♘d2 ♘xc4 12.♘xc4 f6** 12...♖e8 has been played more often and is also okay, but 12...f6 equalises on the spot. **13.♗e3 ♕d7 14.♖ad1 a6 15.c3** (Kuderinov-Beliavsky, Moscow 2011) In this position Black could even have tried to seize the initiative with **15...b5!?N**;

B3) 9.♘bd2N might be an improvement.

8...a6

The most natural reaction, but Black may be able to do without this move.

A) **8...♕d6N 9.a6** 9.♖e1 is another logical continuation. **9...bxa6** 9...♘b6 10.axb7 ♗xb7 11.♗a6 ♗xa6 12.♖xa6∞. **10.♖e1** (10.♘c3!?) leads to a position which needs to be

tested;

B) **8…♗g4 9.♖e1** 9.a6?!N doesn't work because of 9…b5! △ 10.♗xb5? ♘d4∓; 9.h3N ♗h5 10.c3 should be tried by White, e.g. 10…a6 11.♖e1 ♔h8!? 12.♘bd2 (12.g4?! ♗g6 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 c6 seems dangerous as …♗d6 and …f7-f5 is coming) 12…f5 13.♘f1 ♕d6 14.♘g3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♖ad8 16.♗d2 leads to a typical structure which we have discussed a lot in this book and seems to favour White. The black pawns on e5/f5 seem to be more a burden than a strength. **9…♗f6?!** This piece placement favours White, as we will see in the main game too. The counterattack 9…♗b4!N is possible with the pawn on a5. 10.♗d2 ♗xd2 11.♘bxd2 ♘f4=. **10.c3 a6 11.♘bd2 ♘f4 12.♘e4±** Lagarde-Mancini, Nimes 2014.

9.♖e1 ♗f6?!

White is better after this move. White can attack the bishop on f6 with tempo. 9…♗g4N 10.c3 is similar to the position after 8…♗g4 9.h3N and probably transposes (10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘db4!. With a pawn on a4 White could play ♘a3 with advantage, but with the pawn on a5 there is of course a difference. 12.♕d1=; 12.♘a3 ♘xa5 13.♖xe5 ♘xc4 14.dxc4 ♗f6=).

10.♘bd2 ♘f4

10…♗f5 11.♘e4 ♗xe4 12.dxe4 ♘f4 13.♗xf4 exf4 14.e5 ♗e7 (Inkiov-Donev, Kranevo 1996) and now after 15.♕c1!N White gets a dominating position, e.g. 15…♘d4 16.♕xf4 ♘xc2 17.♖ed1 ♕e8 18.♖ac1 ♘b4 19.e6 fxe6 20.♕xc7±.

11.♘e4 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5 13.c3 ♔h8?!

13…♘e6N 14.b4±.

14.♘g3

14.d4N is also clearly better for White.

14…♗g6

14…♗xf3N 15.♕xf3 ♘g6 16.b4±.

15.d4 ♘h5

16.d5

16.♘xe5!N ♗xe5 (16…♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♘xg3 (18…♗xe5? 19.♘xh5 ♗xh5 20.g4 ♗g6 21.f4+–) 19.exf6 ♘e4 20.fxg7+±; 16…♘xg3 17.♘xc6 ♕d6 18.♘e5±) 17.♘xh5± ; White is just a pawn up.

16…♘xg3?!

16…♘b8 17.♘xe5±.

17.dxc6!+– ♕e7

17…♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♘f5 19.cxb7+–.

18.cxb7 ♖ad8 19.♕b3 ♘e4 20.♗e3 ♗h4 21.♖ad1 ♘d6 22.♗xa6 ♗e4 23.♘xh4 ♕xh4 24.♗a7 ♗xg2?!

Black tries something, but it's long over.

25.♔xg2 f5 26.♖xe5 f4 27.♗f1 f3+ 28.♔h1 ♘xb7 29.♖xd8 ♘xd8 30.♕d5

1-0

Sergey Karjakin 2773
Anish Giri 2785
Bilbao 2016 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.c3 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.a4 a6 9.a5

White immediately grabs more space on the queenside.

9.♘bd2 is our main recommendation, covered in Chapter 4.2.

9...b5

A) **9...♘f6 10.♘bd2 h6 11.♕e2 ♖e8 12.♘e4 ♗f8 13.♗b3 ♗e6 14.♗a4 ♘d7 15.b4 f5 16.♘ed2** 16.♘g3N seems better but chances are still rather equal after 16...♕f6 17.♖e1 ♖ad8 as the pawn on d3 is also weak. **16...g5 17.♗b2 ♗g7 18.♘c4 ♗xc4 19.dxc4 g4 20.♖ad1?** Better is 20.♘e1N e4 21.♖d1 ♕e7 22.♘c2 (22.f3 exf3 23.♕xe7 ♖xe7 24.gxf3 ♘de5=) 22...♘de5 23.♘d4∞. **20...gxf3 21.♕xf3 ♖f8**∓ Ivanchuk-Vallejo Pons, Havana 2014;

B) 9...♗g4 10.♘bd2 ♘f6 11.♖e1 ♗d6 12.♕b3 ♖b8 13.♘g5 ♗h5 (Ponomariov-Ismagambetov, Almaty blitz 2016) 14.♘de4N ♘xe4 15.♘xe4 with an edge for White;

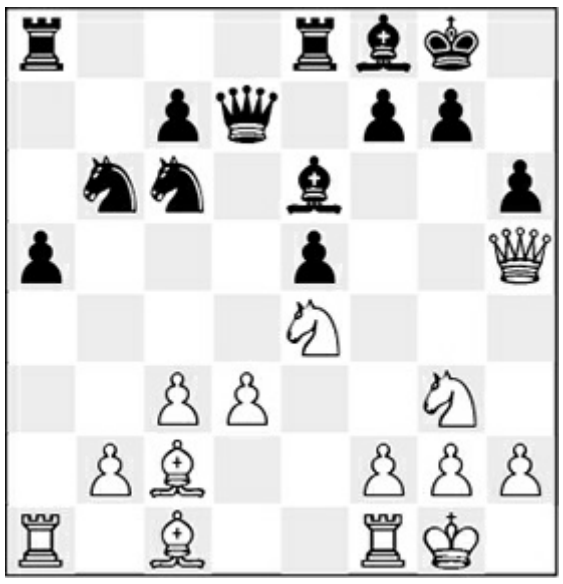
C) **9...♗f5** looks reasonable. In the following game Black equalised without problems: **10.♘bd2 b5 11.axb6 ♘xb6 12.b4** 12.♖e1N ♗xd3 13.♗xd3 ♕xd3 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♖xe5 ♗d6 16.♖e3 ♕b5 17.♘e4=. **12...♘xc4 13.dxc4 ♗a7 14.♕a4 ♕f6 15.♖e1 ♖fe8 16.c5 e4 17.♘g5 e3 18.fxe3 ♗d3 19.♘df3 ♕xc3 20.♗d2 ♕f6=** Arppi-De Pinho, ICCF email 2008.

10.axb6 ♘xb6 11.♗b3

11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♘bd2 ♖d8 14.♖e1 ♘xc4 15.♘xc4 f6 16.♕e2 ♕c5 17.b4 ♕d5 was equal in Karpus-Sirp, Porec jr 2015.

11...♗g4

Attacking the pawn on d3 with **11...♗f5** seems more logical, but White got a great attacking position in the following game: **12.♗c2 ♕d7 13.♕e2 ♖fe8 14.♘bd2 a5 15.♘e4 ♗f8?!** 15...♗e7N controls the square h4 and allows Black to go with his bishop to g6 if White attacks it with ♘g3. **16.♘g3 ♗e6** 16...♗g6?!N 17.♘h4 with the initiative. **17.♘g5 ♗d5 18.♕h5 h6 19.♘5e4 ♗e6?!** Better is 19...♖e6N 20.♘f5 ♖g6 21.h3 ♖e8 22.♗e3±.



analysis diagram

20.♗xh6! f5 21.♗xg7!:

A) **21...♗xg7 22.♘g5 ♘d5 23.♗b3 ♖ab8** 23...♘f6 24.♘xe6 ♘xh5 25.♘c5+ ♕f7 26.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 27.♘xh5±. **24.♕h7+ ♔f8 25.♗xd5 ♗xd5 26.♘xf5 ♗g8 27.♕g6 ♖b6 28.f4! ♘d4 29.♕xg7+ ♕xg7 30.♘xg7 ♘e2+ 31.♔f2 ♔xg7 32.♔xe2±**;

B) **21...♕xg7? 22.♘xf5 ♗xf5** 22...♕f7 23.♕g5+ ♔h8 24.♘f6 ♗xf5 25.♕xf5+–. **23.♕xf5 ♘e7 24.♘f6+ ♔h8 25.♕h5+ ♕h6 26.♕xh6+ ♗xh6 27.♘xe8+–**;

C) **21...fxe4? 22.♕h8+ ♔f7 23.♗d1±** (Piorun-Lampert Germany Bundesliga 2015/16) However, 23.♗f6!!N wins. The idea is 24.♕h7+ ♔xf6 25.♘e4#. Black has no good defence, e.g. 23...♖e7 24.d4! ♔e8 25.♗xe4 ♗d5 26.♗g6+ ♗f7 27.♗xe7 ♘xe7 28.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 29.f4 exd4 30.f5 ♘ed5 31.f6+–.

12.♕e2 ♔h8!?

An interesting choice to play actively with ...f7-f5, but it involves some risk to open the kingside.

13.♗e3 ♗d6 14.h3 ♗h5 15.g4!?

White fights for the light squares and especially for the square e4.

15.♘bd2N f5 16.g4 (16.♗xb6 cxb6 17.♗d5 ♖c8 18.♖xa6 ♘e7 19.♗e6 ♖c6 20.♖fa1 ♗b8 and Black gets counterplay with the idea to transfer the knight to f4*)* 16...♗g6

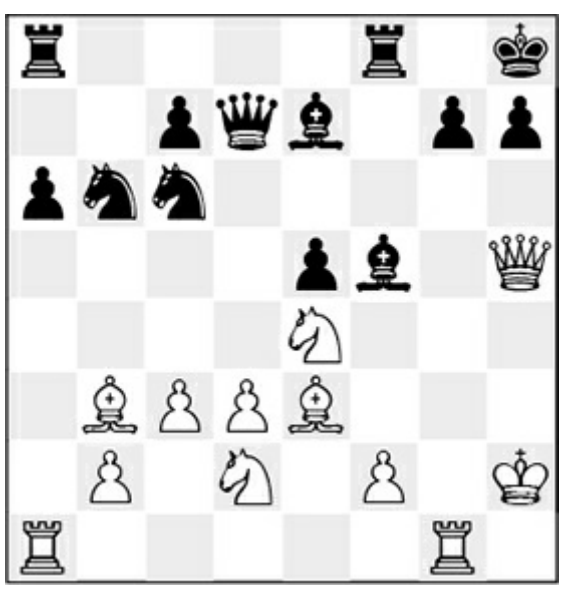
17.♘g5 ♕e8 18.h4 fxg4 19.♕xg4 ♗xd3 20.♖fe1 ♗f5 21.♕g2 ♖b8 22.♖xa6 is an unclear alternative.

15...♗g6 16.♘bd2 ♗e7 17.♘e4 f5 18.gxf5 ♗xf5 19.♔h2 ♕e8 20.♘fd2 ♕d7 21.♖g1 ♗xh3?!

This leads to a dangerous attack for White as he gains a crucial tempo.

21...a5N 22.♕h5 a4 23.♗h6!? g6 (23...gxh6 24.♕xh6 ♗d6 25.♗a2 with an attack) 24.♗a2 ♕xd3 25.♖ae1 ♘d5 26.♗xf8 gxh5 27.♗g7+ ♔g8 28.♖g3 ♕xg3+ 29.♘xg3 ♗e6 30.♗xe5=.

22.♕h5 ♗f5



23.♖xg7

A nice shot. The engines need a lot of time – on a normal computer – to calculate the value of this sacrifice.

23.♗h6N is another choice which leads to a white advantage, e.g. **23...♖g8** 23...gxh6 24.♕xh6 ♗g4 25.f3 ♖f4 26.fxg4 ♗f8 27.♕h5+–. **24.♖xa6! g6** 24...♖xa6? 25.♕f7+–; 24...gxh6 25.♖xa8 ♖xa8 26.♕xh6 ♗g4 27.f3 ♗f8 28.♕h5+–. **25.♖xa8 ♖xa8 26.♘g5! ♗f6 27.♕f3 ♘d8 28.♘c4 ♕xd3 29.♘e3 e4 30.♕f4 ♕d6 31.♕xd6 cxd6 32.♘xf5 gxf5 33.♘xe4±**

23...♔xg7 24.♖g1+ ♔h8 25.♕h6 ♗d6 26.♗xb6?

This could have turned the tables. 26.♖g3!N is probably winning, but the lines are difficult to calculate, e.g. 26...♖ab8 27.♗a2 a5 28.♔g1!. White has to move the king away from the h2-b8 diagonal in order to attack with the knight on e4. 28...a4 29.♘f6 ♕e7 30.♘h5 ♖g8 31.♗xg8 ♖xg8 32.♗g5 ♖g6 33.♗f6+ ♖xf6 34.♘xf6 ♕f7 35.♖g8+ ♕xg8+ 36.♘xg8 ♔xg8 37.♕g5+ ♗g6 38.f4! exf4 39.♘e4+–.

26...♗xe4 27.♘xe4 cxb6 28.♖g6

28...♘a5?

This returns the favour. 28…♗c5!N 29.♖xc6 ♖f4 30.♖f6 (30.♕g5 ♕xc6 31.♕xe5+ ♖f6 32.♕xf6+ ♕xf6 33.♘xf6 ♗xf2–+) 30…♖xf6 31.♕xf6+ ♔g7–+. Objectively White is just an exchange down here.

29.♖xd6 ♕g7 30.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 31.♖d7+ ♔h8 32.♗e6 h6

32…♖ad8N 33.♖a7 ♖a8 (33…♖xd3? 34.♘g5 ♖xf2+ 35.♔g1 ♖g3+ 36.♔xf2 ♖xg5 37.b4+–) 34.♖c7 ♖ab8= △ 35.b4? ♖b7!.

33.b4 ♘c6 34.♗d5 ♖ac8 35.♖b7

35.♘d6N ♖cd8 (35…♘b8 36.♘f7+ ♔g7 37.♖b7±) 36.♗xc6 ♖xf2+ 37.♔g3 ♖xd7 38.♗xd7 ♖c2 39.♘e4 a5 40.bxa5 bxa5.

35…b5

Now the game heads into a clearly equal ending.

36.♔h3 ♖f4 37.♔g2 ♖g4+ 38.♔f1 ♖g7 39.♖b6 ♘e7 40.♖xh6+ ♖h7 41.♖d6 ♘xd5 42.♖xd5 ♖e7 43.♖d6 ♖a8 44.♔g2 ♖f7 45.♔f1 ♖e7 46.♔e2 a5 47.bxa5 ♖xa5 48.♖b6 ♖c7 49.♔e3 ♔g8 50.♖e6 b4 51.cxb4 ♖b5 52.♘c5 ♖a7 53.♖xe5 ♖xb4 54.♘e4 ♔f7 55.f4 ♖a1 56.f5 ♖e1+ 57.♔d2 ♖f1 58.♘d6+ ♔f8 59.♖e8+ ♔g7 60.♖e6 ♖bf4 61.f6+ ♔g6 62.f7+ ♔g7 63.♖e8 ♖f6 64.♖g8+ ♔h7 65.♖d8 ♔g7 66.♔e2 ♖6f2+ 67.♔e3 ♖xf7 68.♘xf7 ♔xf7 69.♖d4 ♔e6 70.♖f4 ♖xf4 71.♔xf4 ♔d5 72.♔e3 ♔e5 73.d4+ ♔d5 74.♔d3 ♔d6 75.♔c4 ♔c6 76.d5+ ♔d6 77.♔d4 ♔d7 78.♔e5 ♔e7 79.d6+ ♔d7 80.♔d5 ♔d8 81.♔e6 ♔e8 82.d7+ ♔d8 83.♔d6

Draw agreed.

In the following structure, White also often plays in the centre and on the queenside. Note that this and several of the quoted games are blitz games, so they have to be taken with a pinch of salt. But even in blitz it's amazing how well these guys play.

Anish Giri 2782
Levon Aronian 2792
Leuven blitz 2016 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.c3 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.a4 a5

8…a6 is the main move. The whole line is covered in Chapter 4.2.

9.♘bd2 ♘b6 10.♗b5 ♗d6 11.♖e1!

Immediately attacking the pawn on e5 seems like the best try in this position. In the same tournament Vishy Anand tried **11.♘e4** first: **11…♗g4** (11…♘a7!?N) **12.h3 ♗h5** and now:

A) **13.♗e3!?N ♘a7** 13…♘d5 14.♕b3 (14.♗d2!?) 14…♘xe3 15.fxe3±. **14.♗xb6 ♘xb5 15.axb5 cxb6 16.d4 exd4 17.g4 ♗g6 18.♘xd6 ♕xd6 19.♕xd4**

analysis diagram

White is slightly better as d4 is a very strong outpost square for the knight. But the material is so reduced that Black should be able to defend;

B) **13.♗g5!?N** is also interesting, to stop Black's …♘a7 plan, e.g. **13…f6** 13…♗e7 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♘g3 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 ♕e6 18.♘e4±. **14.♗e3**

analysis diagram

14…f5 14…♘a7 15.♗xb6 ♘xb5 16.♗e3 ♘a7 17.♕b3+ ♔h8 18.♕xb7±; 14…♔h8 15.♗xb6 cxb6 16.♕e2 ♗c5 17.♖ad1±. **15.♘g3 ♗g6 16.♗xb6!? cxb6 17.♖e1** with an interesting position, where White's chances seem preferable;

C) **13.♖e1 ♘e7?!** 13…♘a7 transposes to Giri-Aronian. **14.d4 exd4** (Anand-So, Leuven blitz 2016) **15.♘xd6!N ♕xd6 16.♕xd4 ♘ed5** 16…♗xf3 17.♕xd6 cxd6 18.gxf3 ♘f5 19.♔h2 ♘h4 20.♖d1 ♘xf3+ 21.♔g3 ♘e5 22.♖xd6 ♘c8 23.♖d5 f6 24.♗e2±. **17.♘h4±**, with the idea 18.♘f5, could give White some initiative.

11…♗g4!

A) **11…♘a7 12.♗c4 ♗f5 13.♗b3! ♗xd3 14.♘e4 ♗xe4 15.♖xe4**. White has a strong initiative and good attacking chances, as the following lines show:

A1) **15…♘c6 16.♖g4 ♘e7** 16…♗e7 17.♕e2 ♔h8 18.♘xe5 ♘xe5 19.♕xe5 ♗f6 20.♕f5 g6 21.♕c2±. **17.♘g5 ♘f5 18.♗c2 e4 19.♘xe4 ♗e7 20.♕f3±**;

A2) **15…♘d7?! 16.♘g5 h6** 16…♘f6? 17.♖h4 h6 18.♕f3! e4 (18…hxg5? 19.♗xg5+–; 18…♗c5? 19.♘h3 ♘h7 20.♕g4 ♔h8 21.♗xh6 gxh6 22.♖xh6 ♖g8 23.♕h5 ♖g7 24.♗c2+–) 19.♘xe4 ♘xe4 20.♖xe4±; 16…♗e7 17.♘e6! fxe6 18.♗xe6+ ♔h8 19.♗xd7±. **17.♕h5 ♕f6 18.♖h4 ♘c5 19.♗c2±**

B) 11…♗f5 is a solid alternative, e.g. 12.♘c4 ♘xc4 13.♗xc4 ♕d7 14.♕b3 h6 15.♘d2 ♖ae8 16.♘e4 ♗e7 17.♗e3 b6 18.♖ad1±.

12.♘e4

12.h3 ♗h5 13.♘e4 transposes after 13...♘a7!.

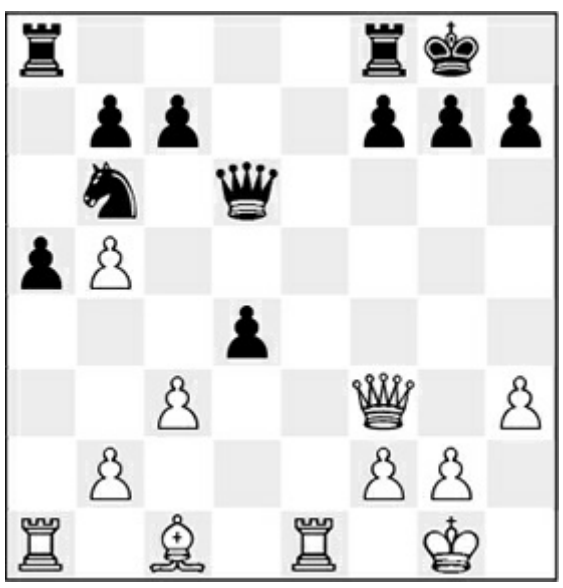
12...♘a7! 13.h3 ♗h5 14.d4 ♘xb5

14...exd4N could be an improvement. After 15.♘xd6 ♕xd6 16.♕xd4 ♗xf3 17.♕xd6 cxd6 18.gxf3 ♘xb5 19.axb5 a4 20.♖e7 White is still pressing, although Black should be able to defend.

15.axb5 exd4 16.♘xd6 ♗xf3

16...♕xd6N 17.♕xd4 (17.g4 ♗g6 18.♕xd4 ♕xd4 19.♘xd4 a4 20.♗f4 is also slightly better for White) 17...♗xf3 18.♕xd6 cxd6 19.gxf3 transposes to 14...exd4.

17.♕xf3 ♕xd6



18.♖d1!

Some days before this game, Vladimir Kramnik and Levon Aronian discussed the same position via a slightly different move order during the first leg of the Grand Chess Tour in Paris. The Russian continued with 18.♗f4 and after 18...♕f6 19.♗xc7 (19.cxd4N c6 20.bxc6 bxc6 21.♕g3 ♘d5 22.♗e5 ♕g6=) 19...♕xf3 20.gxf3 ♘d5 21.♗xa5 dxc3 22.bxc3 ♖fc8 23.♖ed1 ♘f4 24.♔h2 h6 25.♗b4 ♖xa1 26.♖xa1 ♘d5 27.♖d1 ♘xb4 28.cxb4= (Kramnik-Aronian, Paris blitz 2016) the players reached a drawn rook ending.

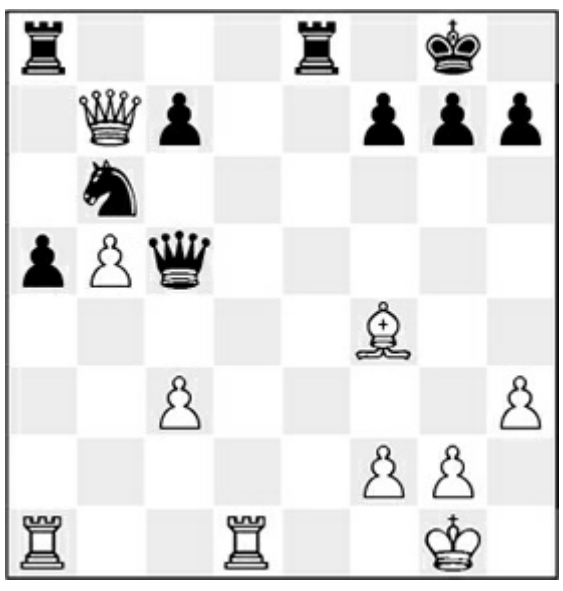
18...♖fe8?!

18...♕e5!N is better but White should keep a small edge after 19.♖xd4 (19.♗f4 ♕xb5 20.♕xb7 dxc3 21.bxc3 ♕a6=) 19...♕xb5 20.♕xb7 ♖ac8 21.c4!? ♕b4 22.♕f3±.

19.♗f4 ♕c5 20.♕xb7!

20.♖xd4N looks more natural, but after the text move White is definitely better.

20...dxc3 21.bxc3



21... ♖ac8?!

21...♖ec8N is more tenacious, but after **22.c4!** White seems on the way to a win:

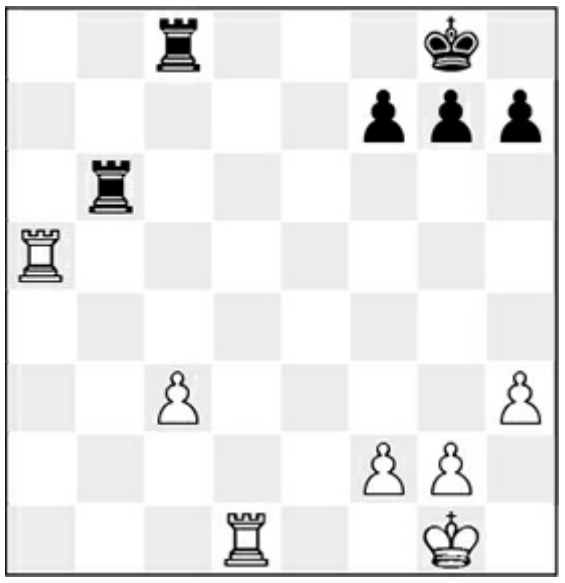
A) **22…♕xc4?! 23.♖xa5! ♖ab8** 23…♖xa5?? 24.♕xc8+ ♘xc8 25.♖d8#. **24.♕f3±**;

B) **22…a4** Despite this dangerous passed pawn White seems much better due to his active pieces. Without computer assistance the following lines are of course difficult to spot, e.g. **23.♖ac1! a3 24.♗e3 ♕b4 25.c5 ♘a4 26.♖d7 ♘c3 27.♕f3 ♖f8 28.b6 cxb6** 28…a2 29.♗d4! (a fantastic move) 29…♕b5 (29…a1♕ 30.♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 31.♔h2+–) 30.♖e7 a1♕ 31.♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 32.♔h2 ♕c4 33.♕xc3 ♕xc3 34.♗xc3+–. **29.♗d4! ♘b5** 29…♘e4 30.♕xe4 bxc5 31.♕e7!+–; 31.♖xc5? a2 32.♕e5 a1♕+ 33.♗xa1 ♖xa1+ 34.♕xa1 ♕xc5=. **30.♗xg7! ♔xg7 31.♕g3+ ♔f6 32.♕e3! ♔g6 33.cxb6! ♖ae8 34.♖c6+ ♔g7 35.♕g5+ ♔h8 36.♕f6+ ♔g8 37.♖d5+–**

22.♕c6?!

22.♖xa5!N ♕xc3 (any other move leaves Black a pawn down) 23.♖a7± and Black is going to lose his pawn on c7.

22…♕xc6 23.bxc6 ♖e6 24.♗xc7 ♖xc6 25.♗xb6 ♖xb6 26.♖xa5



The game has petered out to a drawn double rook endgame. White pressed for a while, but the outcome was never really in doubt.

26…h6 27.♖a7 ♖xc3 28.♖d8+ ♔h7 29.♖xf7 ♖cc6 30.♖ff8 ♖f6 31.♖h8+ ♔g6 32.f3 ♖fd6 33.♔h2 ♖xd8 34.♖xd8 ♔f6 35.♖d4 ♖b2 36.h4 h5 37.♔g3 g6 38.♖a4 ♔g7 39.♖a6 ♔f7 40.♖a1 ♔f6 41.♖f1 ♔f5 42.♖f2 ♖b3 43.♖a2 ♖b4 44.♖e2 ♔f6 45.♔h3 ♖a4 46.g3 ♖a3 47.♔g2 ♖a4 48.♔f2 ♖a3 49.♖d2 ♔f5 50.♔e2 ♔f6 51.♖d3 ♖a1 52.♔e3 ♖a4 53.♖d4 ♖a5 54.♖c4 ♔f7 55.♔e4 ♔f6 56.♖b4 ♖e5+ 57.♔f4 ♖f5+ 58.♔e3 ♖e5+ 59.♖e4 ♖a5 60.♖c4 ♖e5+ 61.♔d3 ♖e1 62.♖f4+ ♔g7 63.♖e4 ♖g1 64.g4 hxg4 65.fxg4 ♖h1 66.g5 ♔f7 67.♔d4 ♖a1 68.♔e5 ♖a5+ 69.♔f4 ♖b5 70.♖a4 ♖f5+ 71.♔g4 ♖b5 72.♖a7+ ♔g8 73.♖a4 ♔f7 74.♖e4 ♖a5 75.♖f4+ ♔g7 76.♖d4 ♔f7 77.♔f4 ♖f5+ 78.♔e4 ♖a5 79.♖c4 ♖b5 80.♔d4 ♖a5 81.♔e4 ♖b5 82.♖c7+ ♔g8 83.♖d7 ♖b4+ 84.♔e5 ♖xh4 85.♔f6 ♖a4 86.♖d8+ ♔h7 87.♖d7+ ♔g8 88.♔xg6 ♖a6+

½-½

White's initiative often continues in the endgame:

Evgeny Vasiukov 2560
Florin Gheorghiu 2540
Manila 1974 (10)
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗e7 4.d4 d6 5.dxe5

5...dxe5

5…♘xe5? is a common mistake at amateur level. It's amazing how many games can be found in the database with this move. By 6.♘xe5 dxe5 7.♕h5!+– White wins a pawn due to the double attack on f7 and e5. The following game is a nice miniature: 7…g6 8.♕xe5 ♘f6 9.♗h6 ♖g8 10.♘c3 ♘g4 11.♕f4 ♘xh6 12.♖d1 ♗d6 13.♕xh6 ♕f6 14.♘d5 ♕xb2 15.♕xh7 ♖f8 16.♕h4 ♗e6? (allows a nice mate in two, but White was winning anyway) 17.♕e7+! ♗xe7 18.♘xc7# Lu Shanglei-Bitoon, Olongapo City 2015.

6.♕xd8+ ♗xd8 7.♘c3

Starting from this position White scores extremely well in practice.

7...♘f6

Black has tried several other moves too, but that doesn't change the nature of the position.

8.♗e3

8...0-0?!

This has been known to be bad since this game from 1974, but other moves aren't convincing either:

A) **8…a6 9.0-0-0 ♗g4?!** 9…♗e7 10.♘d5±. **10.h3 ♗h5** 10…♗xf3 11.gxf3 0-0 12.♘d5±. **11.g4 ♗g6 12.♗d5! ♘d7** (Vasiukov-Usachyi, Biel Wch-sr 1994) **13.h4!N h5 14.g5 ♗e7 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♖xd7 ♔xd7 17.♘xe5+ ♔c8 18.♘xc6 ♗d6 19.♗d4±**;

B) **8…♘g4 9.♗d2** 9.♗c5±. **9…0-0 10.h3 ♘f6 11.0-0-0 ♘d7 12.♘d5 ♘b6 13.♗b3 ♘d7 14.♗g5!±** Yakovich-Kovalev, Gistrup 1996;

C) **8…♗d7 9.0-0-0 ♘g4?** 9…♗e7 10.♖he1±. **10.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 11.♖xd7+ ♔g6 12.♘d5+–** Vasiukov-Usachyi, Arco Wch-sr 2001;

D) **8…h6 9.h3 0-0 10.0-0-0 ♗e7 11.♘d5 ♘xd5** 11…♗d8 12.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13.a3!?±. **12.exd5 ♘a5** 12…e4 13.dxc6 exf3 14.cxb7 ♗xb7 15.g3±. **13.♘xe5 ♘xc4 14.♘xc4±** Ninov-

Vepkhvishvili, Agneaux 2005;

E) **8...♗e7 9.♘b5 ♗d6 10.0-0-0 ♔e7 11.♘c3 ♗e6 12.♘d5+ ♗xd5?!** 12...♔f8 13.♘g5 ±. **13.exd5 ♘a5 14.♗e2**± Antipov-Sanal, Albena jr 2011;

F) **8...♗g4 9.0-0-0 ♗e7 10.h3 ♗e6?!** 10...♗xf3 11.gxf3 0-0 12.♘d5±. **11.♗xe6 fxe6 12.♘g5! ♘d8 13.♘b5 ♖c8 14.♘xa7 ♖a8 15.♘b5**± Goh-Faraj, Zaozhuang 2012.

9.♗c5 ♖e8 10.♘g5! ♗e6 11.♘xe6 fxe6 12.♗b5!±

White is much better as Black's pawn structure is a shambles.

12...♘d7

12...♗e7 13.♗xe7 ♖xe7 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.0-0-0± Solodovnichenko-Bergen, Feffernitz 2005.

13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♗a3 ♘b6 15.b3 ♗e7

15...a5 16.♔e2 a4 17.♗c5 ♘d7 18.♗e3 axb3 19.cxb3± Bitoon-Wong, Kuala Lumpur 2011.

White is practically a distant passed pawn up.

16.♗xe7 ♖xe7 17.0-0-0 ♔f8 18.♖d3 ♖d7 19.♖xd7 ♘xd7 20.♘d1

20.f3±.

20...a5 21.a4! c5 22.♘b2 ♘b6 23.♖d1 c4

A good practical try.

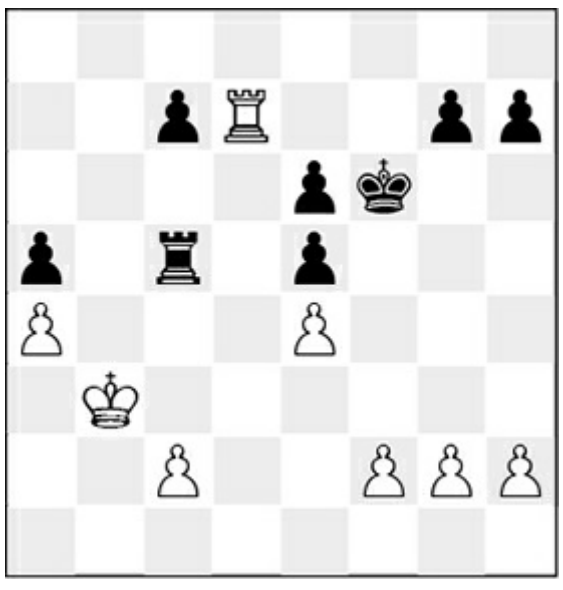
24.bxc4 ♔e7 25.c5 ♘d7 26.♘d3

26.♘c4 ♘xc5 27.♘xe5± △ ♘xa4?! 28.♖d7++–.

26...♖a6 27.♔b2 ♖c6 28.♔a3! ♔f6

28...♘xc5 29.♘xe5±.

29.♔b3 ♘xc5+ 30.♘xc5 ♖xc5 31.♖d7



White is still better as he has the better pawn structure and the more active pieces.

31...♖c6 32.c3! h6 33.f3 g5 34.g3

34.♖h7 ♔g6 35.♖h8± with the idea 36.♖a8.

34...♔g6 35.h3?

35.♖d8± is more to the point.

35...♖b6+ 36.♔c2 ♖c6?

36...♖b8! 37.♖xc7 ♖f8 with counterplay makes White's task much more difficult.

37.♖d8!+–

Now White is on the right path again by attacking the black a-pawn.

37...♖c4?!

37...♖a6 38.♖c8 ♖a7 39.♔d3+–.

38.♔b3 ♖c6 39.♖a8 ♖c5 40.♖b8! ♖c6 41.♖b5

White is winning another pawn.

41...♖a6 42.♖xe5 ♔f6 43.♖c5 c6 44.f4 ♖b6+ 45.♔c2 ♖a6 46.♔d3

1-0

11.5 – Alternative strategies for White

11.5.1 – An early ♗e3

Another strategy to play the Slow Italian is an early ♗e3 to exchange the dark-squared bishops. This is not our main recommendation, but in this game we take a look at it in some detail:

Willy Hendriks 2447
David Ledger 2254
Hastings 2008 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♗c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.c3 a6 6.0-0

Another strategical masterpiece including ♗e3 is the following game: **6.♗b3 d6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♘f1** White postpones castling. **8...d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘g3 ♘f6 11.0-0 h6 12.♗e3!** Here this move is the typical option.

analysis diagram

12...♗xe3 13.fxe3 ♖e8 14.♘h4 ♗e6 15.♘hf5 ♗xb3?! 16.♕xb3 ♖e6 16...♕xd3? 17.♘xh6++–. **17.♕xb7?!** 17.♖ad1 gives White very good play.

analysis diagram

17…♖a7? The typical 17…♔h7 was called for, e.g. 18.e4 ♘e7=. **18.♕b3 ♕xd3 19.♖ad1 ♕b5 20.♕c2 ♖b7?** 20…e4 limits the damage. **21.♘e4 ♘e8 22.♕f2 ♔h7 23.♘xh6 1-0** Degraeve-Dorfman, Aix-les-Bains ch-FRA 2007.

6...d6 7.♗b3

Obviously our main move 7.♘bd2 does not go together with an early ♗e3.

7...♗a7

7…0-0 8.♗g5 is another strategy played by Tiviakov that can only be applied without an early ♘bd2.

8.♗e3!?

An interesting approach after …♗a7, which has also been played by Tiviakov. White often wants to follow up with ♘h4 sooner or later.

8...0-0

8…♗xe3 9.fxe3 0-0 10.♘bd2 is a major branch here. Usually White will play on the kingside. If this does not work well, then attention can be shifted to the central advance d3-d4 or even to queenside play if Black concentrates his forces on the kingside.

analysis diagram

A) 10…♘e7 11.♘h4 ♔h8 12.h3 ♘eg8 13.♕e1 g6 and now in Khamrakulov-Rizouk, Lorca 2005, it was an idea to regroup as Black has stopped ♘f5:

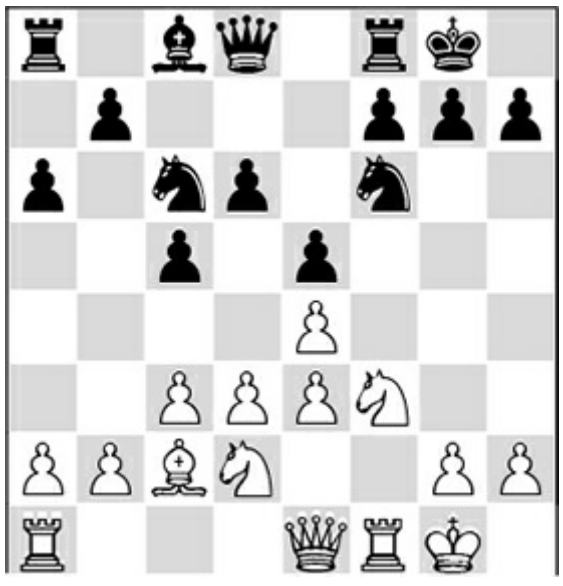
analysis diagram

14.♘hf3N ♕e7 15.♗c2 ♗e6 16.a4 a5 17.d4 ♖fe8 18.♕g3 with a slight initiative;

B) 10…♗e6 11.♕e2 ♕e7 12.h3 ♘b8 13.♗c2 c5 14.d4 ♗d7 (Malakhov-Caruana, Tromsø 2013) 15.a3N ♘c6 16.dxc5 dxc5 17.♘c4 ♖ad8 18.♘b6 ♗e6 19.c4±;

C) 10…d5 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♕e2 ♗g4 13.♕f2 ♗h5 14.d4 ♖e8 (Leshin-Rause, ICCF corr 1990) 15.♖ae1N ♘f6 16.♕h4 ♗g6 17.♘c4±;

D) **10…♘a5 11.♗c2 c5 12.♕e1 ♘c6**



analysis diagram

and now we recommend **13.h3 ♘e7** (13…b5 14.♘h4 ♗e6 15.♕f2 b4 16.♗a4 ♘e7 17.c4

h6 18.♔h2 ♖c8 19.g4 ♔h8 (19…♗xg4? 20.♖g1±) 20.♕g3 with pressure on the kingside in Lopez Martinez-Vidarte Morales, Catalonia tt 2014) **14.♘h4 ♘g6 15.♘xg6 fxg6 16.♗b3+ ♔h8 17.a4 b6 18.♗d5 ♖b8 19.c4 ♗d7 20.b3 ♕e7 21.g4** with a slight space advantage in Wang Hao-Gopal, Cebu City Ach 2007.

9.♘bd2 ♘e7

9…h6!? 10.h3 ♖e8

analysis diagram

11.♖e1 is Tiviakov's choice. 11.♗xa7!? might be a promising idea, as White's rook on e1 is not optimally placed after fxe3 in Tiviakov's line and the resulting positions are similar to our main recommendations: 11…♖xa7 12.♘c4 ♗e6 13.♖e1 ♖a8 (13…♗xc4 14.♗xc4 ♘a5 (Sadvakasov-Becerra Rivero, Ledyard 2008) 15.♗d5N ♕d7 (15…c6?! 16.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 17.b4±) 16.b4 ♘c6 17.♗b3±) 14.♘e3 ♗xb3 15.♕xb3 ♖b8 16.♖ad1 ♕d7 17.♘h4 ♘a5 18.♕c2 d5 19.♘hf5± Saric-Toth, Balatonlelle jr 2006. **11…♗xe3 12.fxe3 ♗e6 13.♗c2**

analysis diagram

If Black plays …d6-d5 White usually takes and follows up with d3-d4. If Black holds station then objectively White has no advantage, but the position is a bit easier to play due to the half-open f-file and the option of playing the d3-d4-pawn advance.

13…♘e7 13…d5 14.exd5 ♘xd5 (14…♕xd5 15.d4 exd4 16.exd4 ♗f5 17.♗b3 ♕d6 18.♘c4 ♕g3 (Barua-Thakur, New Delhi 2009) 19.♘ce5N ♘xe5 20.♘xe5 ♗e6 21.♕d2 ♗xb3 22.axb3 ♖e6 23.♖e3±) 15.d4 exd4 16.exd4 ♘f6 (Tiviakov-Gravel, Yucatan 2004) 17.♘e4N ♘xe4 18.♗xe4 ♗d5 19.♘d2±. **14.♘f1 c6** 14…c5N 15.♘g3=; 14…♘g6 15.♘g3 d5 16.d4 dxe4 (Vega Gutierrez-Trigo Urquijo, Linares ch-ESP 2014) 17.♘xe4N ♗f5 18.♘g3 ♗xc2 19.♕xc2=. **15.♘g3 ♕c7** 15…♕b6 16.b3 ♖ad8 17.♕e2 ♘g6 18.d4= Kayumov-Kallio, Budapest 2003. **16.d4 ♖ad8 17.a4 ♘g6 18.♕d2 a5 19.♕f2 ♗c8 20.♖ac1 ♕b6**

21.b3 ♕c7 22.♖f1 b6 ½-½ Mergard-Kostanjsek, ICCF email 2011.

10.♘h4

10...♘g6

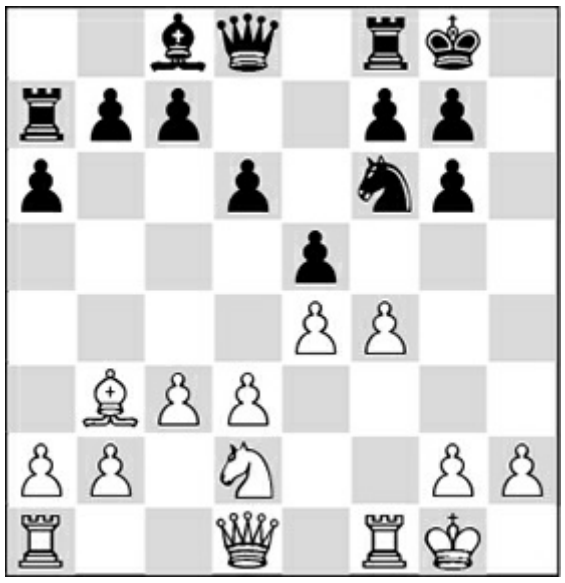
A) **10...♔h8 11.♗xa7 ♖xa7 12.f4** 12.d4!?N can also be considered here. **12...exf4** 12...c5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.♘c4 ♕c7 15.d4 exd4 16.e5 ♘fd5 17.♘d6 ♗e6 18.cxd4 ♖aa8 19.♕d2 f6 (Singeisen-Tosi, ICCF email 2011) 20.♖ae1N cxd4 21.exf6 ♕xd6 22.fxe7 ♖xf1+ 23.♔xf1 ♖e8 24.♕xd4 ♖xe7 25.♘f3±; 12...♘g6 13.♘xg6+ fxg6 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.♘c4± Kurmann-Vuilleumier, Lausanne 2006. **13.♖xf4 ♘g6** 13...d5? 14.♕f3 ♘eg8 15.e5± Tiviakov-Golod, St Vincent 2003. **14.♘xg6+ fxg6 15.d4±** Vehi Bach-Cruz Lopez Claret, La Massana 2010;

B) **10...♗g4 11.♕e1 ♘h5 12.h3**

analysis diagram

12...♗e6 (Michiels-Vandevoort, Pays de Charleroi 2003) **13.♗xe6** (Emms) **13...fxe6 14.♘hf3 ♘c6** 14...♘f4?! 15.♗xa7 ♖xa7 16.g3 ♘fg6 17.d4±. **15.♗xa7 ♖xa7 16.g3±**

11.♘xg6 hxg6 12.♗xa7 ♖xa7 13.f4



The point of White's plan. Now the position looks more like a King's Gambit than a Slow Italian.

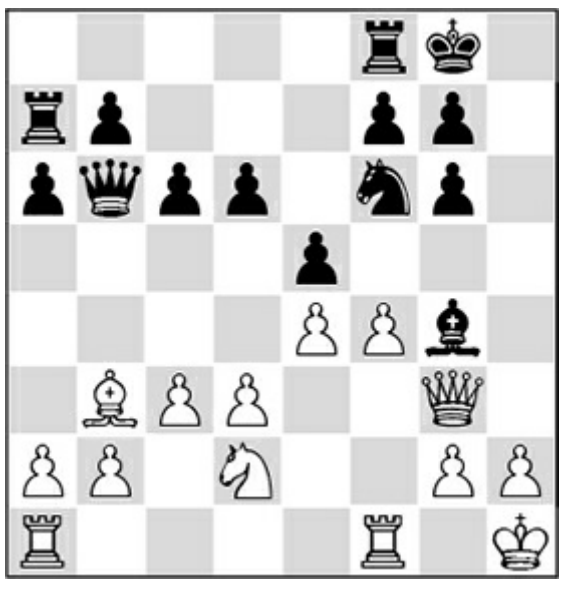
13...c6 14.♕f3 ♕b6+?

Simon Williams' suggestion 14...b5 is called for, when White has a kind of King's Gambit Declined attack on the kingside, e.g. 15.f5 gxf5 16.exf5 d5 17.♖ae1 ♖e8 18.g4 with an attack.

15.♔h1 ♗g4?

The bishop is not safe on the kingside. 15...a5 limits the damage, e.g. 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.a4±.

16.♕g3



16...♗e2?

This falls into the trap completely, but White is also much better after 16...exf4 17.♕xf4 ♕d8 (17...♗e2? 18.♖fe1 ♗xd3 19.♕g3+–) 18.♕g3±.

17.fxe5 ♗xf1 18.exf6 ♗e2 19.♕xg6 ♕xb3 20.♕xg7#

1-0

11.5.2 – White postpones castling

This is a principal alternative and is favoured by Tiviakov. Emms deals with it in detail in the first chapter of *Beating 1.e4 e5*.

David Howell 2593
Adam Ashton 2325
Halifax ch-GBR rapid 2008 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 a6 6.♗b3

This is the main move, and as we wait to play it in our main recommendation some additional work is needed to complete a full repertoire.

6...♗a7 7.h3

White waits and wants to save the tempo for 0-0 and invest it in the kingside initiative.

7...d6 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♘f1!?

The point of White's strategy.

9...d5

By far the most often played move. Black wants to counter White's plans on the wing by direct action in the centre.

10.♕e2 dxe4 11.dxe4 ♕e7

11...♘h5 12.g3 ♘f6 13.g4 ♘d7 (Komliakov-Safin, Ashkhabad 1996) is played more often and now we suggest 14.♗e3N ♘c5 15.♗d5±.

12.♘g3

12...h6?!

This gives White a hook and makes a knight on f5 even stronger. **12...♗e6 13.♗c2 ♘e8!?** is one critical continuation (13...♖fe8?! 14.♘h4 ♕f8 15.♘hf5± Tiviakov-Sargissian, Tripoli Wch 2004), e.g. **14.♘f5 ♗xf5 15.exf5 ♘d6 16.♗e3 e4 17.♘d2 ♗xe3 18.♕xe3 ♘xf5 19.♕xe4 ♘d6 20.♕xe7 ♘xe7 21.0-0-0** and White was marginally better in Legemaat-Filipchenko, ICCF email 2009.

13.♘h4 ♔h7?

13...♖d8 14.♘hf5 ♗xf5 15.♘xf5 ♕d7 16.0-0 ♘e7 is called for.

14.♘hf5 ♕e8?

14...♕d8 15.♕f3 ♘a5 limits the damage.

15.♕f3 ♘g8?

This retreat runs into a typically powerful hammer blow, but good advice is already hard to give.

16.♘xg7!! ♔xg7 17.♘h5+

1-0

Sometimes White can even attack with g2-g4:

Lucian Catalin Carmaciu 2423
Marc Lacrosse 2183
Cappelle-la-Grande 2014 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♗b3 ♗a7 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.h3 d5

8...d6 9.♘f1 ♗e6 10.♗g5. This is another strategy for White, which is especially dangerous if White has not castled. **10...h6 11.♗h4 ♘b8 12.g4 ♘bd7 13.g5 hxg5 14.♗xg5 ♕e8 15.♖g1 ♗xb3 16.axb3 ♕e6 17.♘g3 d5 18.♕d2 dxe4 19.dxe4 g6** 19...♖fd8!? is critical. **20.b4** The engines prefer 20.♗e3⩲. **20...c5?** 20...♖fd8 is again called for.

analysis diagram

21.♗h4! The bishop opens the queen's path. **21...♖fc8?! 22.♕h6 ♕e8 23.♘f5 ♕f8 24.♖xg6+ 1-0** Can-Asgarizadeh, Moscow 2015.

9.♕e2 ♖e8 10.♘f1 h6?!

This gives White's attack a hook. 10...♘a5 is the main move.

11.g4 dxe4

One high-level example after **11...♘a5** is: **12.♘g3** 12.♗c2 is the alternative. **12...♘xb3 13.axb3 dxe4 14.dxe4 ♗e6?!** 14...♘h7 is probably more critical. **15.g5 hxg5 16.♗xg5 ♗xb3?! 17.♖g1 b5?** But good advice is already hard to give.

analysis diagram

18.♗xf6?! 18.♘d2!? is even stronger, e.g. 18…♗c2 19.♘h5 ♖e6 20.♕f3+–. **18…♕xf6 19.♘h5 ♕h6 20.♘xg7 ♔h8?! 21.♘f5 ♕f6 22.♘d2 1-0** Mamedov-Caruana, Moscow Wch blitz 2010.

12.dxe4 ♗e6 13.♘g3

Another example is 13.g5 hxg5 14.♗xg5 ♗xb3 15.axb3 ♕d6 16.♘g3 ♘e7 17.♖g1 g6 18.♖d1 ♕e6 19.♕c4 ♘c6 20.♔e2 ♗b6 21.♖d3 ♘h7 22.h4 f6 23.♗c1± Ramesh-Delorme, Nancy 2008.

13…♕d7?

13…♗xb3 14.axb3 ♘h7 is more circumspect, but White is still pressing after 15.h4.

14.g5

The typical can opener that uses the hook h6.

14…hxg5 15.♗xg5 ♗xb3?

15…♘h7 is called for, but White's strong attack continues after 16.♖d1 ♕c8 17.♖g1.

16.♗xf6 ♕e6

16…gxf6 17.axb3 ♖ed8 18.♘h5 ♕e6 19.♘h4+-.

At first sight it does not seem to be so clear as White's forces do not look well organised. But his attack will crash through sooner rather than later:

17.♘h5! gxf6 18.axb3 ♔f8

18...♔h8 19.♘h4 ♖g8 20.0-0-0+–.

19.♘h4 ♘e7

19...♕xb3 20.0-0 ♘e7 21.♕g4+–.

20.♕d2 ♘g6 21.♘f5 ♘f4 22.0-0-0

1-0

Chapter 12
Typical endgames

Usually it does not make too much sense to discuss endgames in an opening book, but this topic is different as one of White's main strategies is to preserve the strategic initiative into the endgame.

Aleksander Delchev 2597
Jan Gustafsson 2616
France tt 2005 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗c5 5.c3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♖e1 0-0 9.h3 h6 10.♘bd2 ♘h5 11.♘f1 ♕f6 12.♗e3 ♘f4 13.♔h2

Our main recommendation is 13.d4 – see Chapter 7.2.

13...♗e6 14.d4 ♘e7 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♗xa7 ♖xa7 17.♘e3 ♗xb3 18.axb3 ♕e6

Now White invades in typical style on the d-file – an open file is like an open wound:

19.♕d2! ♖aa8 20.♖ad1 f6 21.♕d7 ♖ac8 22.b4 ♖f7 23.g3 ♕xd7 24.♖xd7 ♘e6 25.♖ed1 ♘c6

26.♖7d5!

White preserves his potential.

26...♘e7 27.♖5d3 ♖ff8 28.♖d7 ♖f7 29.♘c4 ♘c6 30.♖7d5 ♘g5 31.♘fd2 ♘e6 32.♘b3 ♘e7 33.♖5d3 ♘c6

33...♘g5? 34.♘c5±.

34.♔g2 ♔f8 35.h4 h5 36.♘e3 ♔e8 37.♔f1 ♖d8 38.♖xd8+ ♘cxd8 39.♔e2 ♖d7

Black has managed to neutralise the pressure on the d-file, but White's initiative persists due to his more active knights.

40.♖f1

Again the rook should be preserved.

40...♘f7 41.f4 ♘d6 42.♘d2

After 42.f5 ♘f8 43.♘c5 ♖d8 44.♘d5 c6 45.♘b6 ♔e7 White is better, but Black is very solid and it is not easy to break through. So Delchev continues to manoeuvre.

42...♘d8 43.fxe5 fxe5 44.♘f5 ♖f7 45.♘xd6+ cxd6 46.♖d1

Again Delchev preserves his rook for future action.

46...♖f6 47.♘c4 ♘f7 48.♘e3 ♘h6 49.c4 ♖g6 50.♖d5 ♖xg3 51.♖xd6 ♘g4 52.♘f5 ♖g2+ 53.♔f3 ♖xb2 54.♘xg7+

54...♔f8?

54...♔e7 55.♖b6 ♘h2+ 56.♔e3 ♘g4+ 57.♔d3 ♘f2+ 58.♔c3 ♘d1+ would have been a draw.

55.♘xh5 ♘h2+ 56.♔g3 ♘f1+ 57.♔g4 ♘e3+ 58.♔g5 ♔e7?

58...♘xc4 probably still holds, but over the board it is next to impossible to defend, e.g. 59.♖d7 ♖d2 60.♖xb7 ♘d6 61.♖b6 ♘xe4+ 62.♔f5 ♖h2! 63.♔e6 ♔g8 64.♔xe5 ♖xh4 65.♘f4 ♘d2±.

59.♖b6 ♘xc4 60.♖xb7+ ♔d6 61.♖a7 ♖xb4?!

61...♖g2+ was the last chance, e.g. 62.♔f5 ♘e3+ 63.♔f6 ♘g4+ 64.♔g6 ♘h2+ 65.♔f7 ♖g4 66.♘g7±.

62.♖xa6+ ♔c5

62...♔e7 63.♘g3 ♘d2 64.h5+–.

63.♘f6 ♖b1 64.h5 ♖g1+ 65.♔f5 ♖f1+ 66.♔g6 ♖g1+ 67.♔f7 ♖h1 68.♖a8 ♔d4 69.♖d8+ ♔e3 70.h6 ♖xh6

70...♘d2 71.h7 ♘xe4 72.h8♕+–.

71.♘g4+ ♔xe4 72.♘xh6 ♔f4 73.♔e6 e4 74.♔d5 ♘d2 75.♖f8+ ♔e3 76.♘g4+ ♔d3 77.♘f2+

1-0

Ivan Saric 2637
Zhao Xue 2576
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (11)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 d6 6.a4 0-0 7.♖e1 ♘a5 8.♗a2 c5 9.c3 a6 10.d4 ♕c7 11.♘a3 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5

12...♗xf3 13.♕xf3 cxd4 14.b4 ♘c6 15.b5 axb5 16.axb5 ♘d8 17.cxd4 exd4 18.♗b2 ♘e6 19.♗xe6 fxe6 20.♕b3 ♕d7 21.♘c2±.

13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♘c4 ♘xc4 15.♗xc4 ♖ad8 16.♕e2 ♗g6?! 17.♘d2 ♖d7?!

17...a5 18.g3 ♘e8 is a better set-up.

18.a5!

It is important to fix the weaknesses on the queenside and to bring in ♗a4 as an option later.

18...♘h5

18...♖fd8 19.♗b3 h6 20.♗c2 ♕d6 21.♘c4 ♕e6 22.♘b6 ♖d6 23.♖a3±.

19.♘f1 ♕d8

19...♘f4 20.♗xf4 exf4 21.♕g4 ♔h8 22.e5 f6 23.♕xf4±.

20.♗e3 h6 21.♖ed1

21...♖xd1?

This plays into White's hands. Waiting with 21...♔h7 is more tenacious.

22.♖xd1 ♕c8

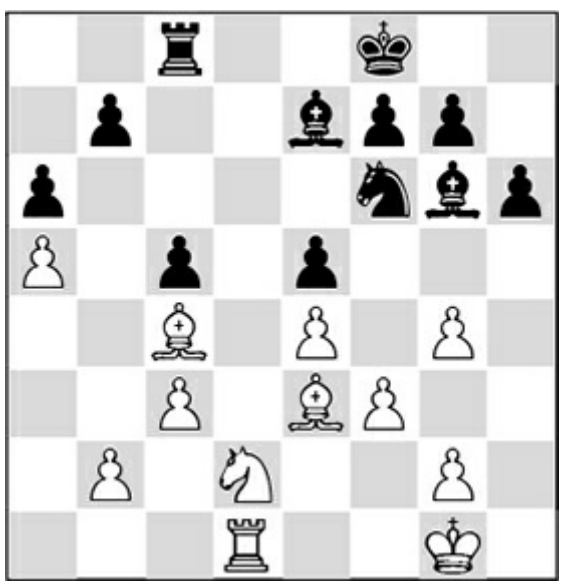
22...♕xa5 23.♖d7 ♗g5 24.♖xb7±.

23.♕g4 ♕xg4 24.hxg4 ♘f6 25.f3 ♖c8

25...♖d8 26.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 27.♗xc5 ♗xa5 28.b4 ♗d8 (28...♘d7 29.♗d6 ♗b6+ 30.♔h2 a5 31.♗d5±) 29.♗d6 b5 30.♗e2 ♘d7 31.c4 bxc4 32.♗xc4 a5 33.♗b5 ♘f8 34.bxa5 ♗xa5 35.♗xe5±.

26.♘d2 ♔f8?

26...♖d8 is more tenacious, e.g. 27.♗b3 (27.♔f2!?) 27...♘e8 28.♖a1 ♔f8 29.♗d5 ♘c7 30.♗xb7 ♖b8 31.♗c6 f6 32.♘c4±.



27.♗b3!

The begin of a very strong regrouping.

27...♘h7

27...♖d8 28.♘c4 ♖xd1+ 29.♗xd1 ♘d7 30.♗a4+–.

28.♘c4 f6 29.♖d7 ♖b8 30.♘b6 ♗e8 31.♗d5 ♘g5 32.♖xb7 ♖xb7 33.♗xb7 ♘e6

33...♗b5 34.c4+–.

34.♗xa6 ♘c7 35.♗b7 ♗b5 36.♘d5

1-0

Nigel Short 2615
Lajos Portisch 2605

Brussels 1986 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.b4

Plans with b2-b4 can also be interesting. We mention them only as alternatives. In the game a typical structure with an open d-file will arise that can also arise via our main recommended move order.

5...♗b6 6.d3 a6 7.0-0 d6 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♗b3

9.a4 ♘e7 10.a5 ♗a7 11.♗b3 is another interpretation of this variation, e.g. 11...♘g6 12.♘c4 h6 13.♗e3 ♗e6 14.♗xa7 ♖xa7 15.♖e1 ♖a8 16.d4 ♘xe4 17.♖xe4 d5 18.♖xe5 dxc4 19.♖xe6! fxe6 20.♗xc4 ♕f6 21.♕c2 ♔h8? 22.♖e1 ♘f4 23.♘e5 ♕f5 24.♖e4 ♖f6 25.f3 ♖d8 26.♕d2 ♖d6? 27.♕xf4 ♕xf4 28.♖xf4 ♖xf4 29.♘g6+ ♔h7 30.♘xf4 ♖c6 31.♗d3+ ♔g8 32.♗e4 1-0 Short-Zhang Zhong, Beijing 2003.

9...♘e7 10.♖e1 ♘g6 11.h3 ♗e6 12.♘c4 ♗a7 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♖xe3 h6 15.d4 ♕e7 16.♕e1 ♘h7 17.♖d1 ♖ad8 18.♘a5 ♗c8 19.♔h2 ♘f4 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.♘c4 ♖xd1 22.♕xd1 ♖d8 23.♕c2 ♘g6 24.♖d3 ♖xd3

25.♕xd3 ♘f6 26.g3 ♗d7 27.♘e3 ♗b5 28.♗c4

28.♕c2!?.

28...♗c6?!

28...♗xc4 29.♘xc4 c5 is almost equal.

29.♘d2 ♘e8?!

Not accurate, but Black's position is difficult to defend in any case, as there is no counterplay.

30.♗d5!

Short begins to unbalance the position more and more.

30...♗xd5 31.exd5!

Short creates a dangerous majority on the queenside.

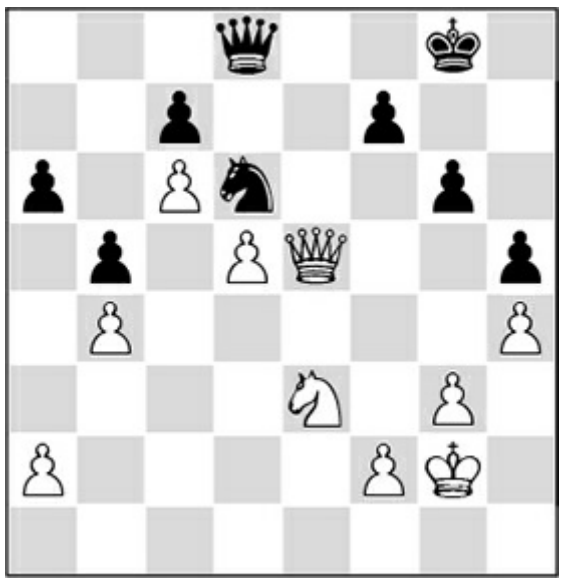
31...♘f6 32.♘e4 ♘xe4 33.♕xe4 ♘f8 34.♘f5 ♕f6 35.c4 h5 36.♔g2 g6 37.♘e3 ♘h7 38.h4 ♕e7 39.c5 ♘f6 40.♕c4 e4?

This opens paths into the black position for White. Waiting with 40...♕d7 was called for.

41.♕d4 ♕d8 42.♕e5 b6 43.c6

43.♕g5!? bxc5 44.bxc5 ♕e7 45.d6 cxd6 46.c6 ♕c7 47.♕xf6 ♕xc6 48.♕d4+–.

43...♘e8 44.♕xe4 ♘d6 45.♕e5 b5



46.g4?!

It was better to use the f-pawn as battering ram with 46.f4 ♔h7 47.f5±.

46...hxg4 47.h5 ♔h7?

47...gxh5 48.♕xh5 ♕f6 49.♕xg4+ ♔f8 was the last chance to fight.

48.♘xg4 ♕h4

49.♕f4!

The decisive blow.

49...g5

49...♕xh5? 50.♘f6++–.

49...gxh5? 50.♘f6++–.

50.♘f6+ ♔g7 51.♕xh4 gxh4 52.♘d7 ♘f5 53.♘b8 ♘e7 54.♘xa6 ♘xd5 55.♔h3 ♔f6 56.♔xh4 ♔f5 57.a3 f6 58.f3 ♔e6 59.♔g4 ♘e3+ 60.♔f4 ♘d5+ 61.♔e4 f5+ 62.♔d4 ♔d6 63.h6 ♘f6 64.♘xc7

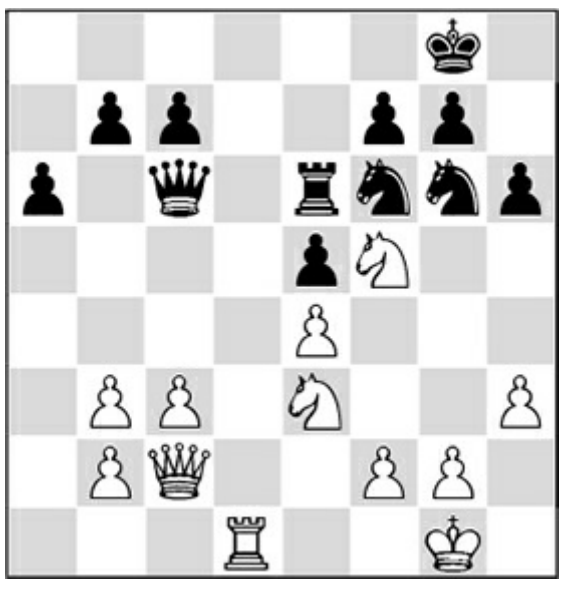
1-0

Spyros Kofidis 2592
Kjell-Erik Krantz 2522
Argentina cr 1996

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♗b3 d6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.h3 ♗a7 9.♘f1

We recommend 9.0-0.

9...d5 10.♕e2 ♖e8 11.♘g3 h6 12.♘h2 dxe4 13.dxe4 ♗e6 14.♘g4 ♗xb3 15.axb3 ♖e6 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.♘xe3 ♘e7 18.0-0 ♘g6 19.♖fd1 ♕e8 20.♕c2 ♖d8 21.♘gf5 ♖xd1+ 22.♖xd1 ♕c6



White's slight initiative is annoying, and now he starts transformations to increase the pressure.

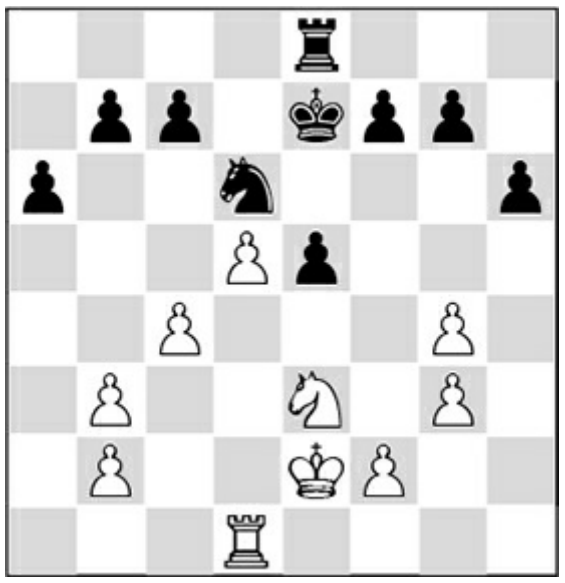
23.♘d5 ♖e8 24.g3 ♘xd5 25.exd5!? ♕d7 26.♕e4 ♘e7 27.♘e3 ♘c8

27...♕xh3 28.♕xe5 ♕d7 29.c4 is also slightly better for White, e.g. 29...♘g6 30.♕f5 ♕xf5 31.♘xf5 ♖e2 32.c5 ♘e5 33.d6 cxd6 34.cxd6 ♘d7 35.♖c1 ♖d2 36.♖c7±.

28.♕g4 ♕xg4 29.hxg4 ♔f8 30.c4 ♘d6 31.♔f1 ♔e7?!

31...a5 is almost equal.

32.♔e2



32...♖d8?

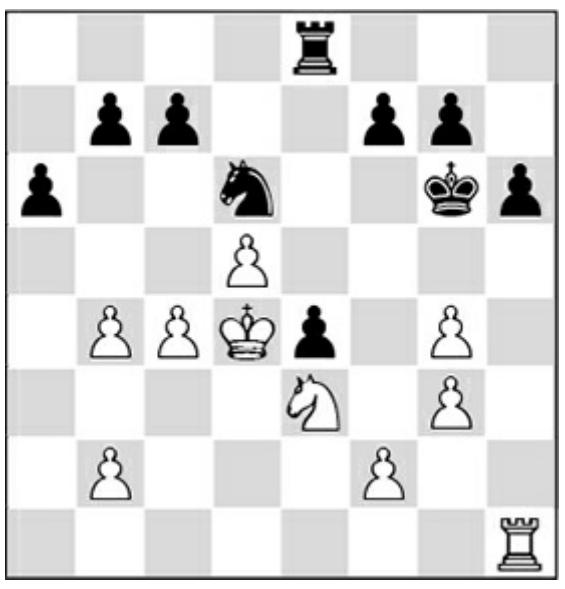
Now White's queenside majority will start rolling.

32...c5 was called for, when after 33.dxc6 bxc6 34.♖a1 ♖a8 35.b4 White is better, but Black can still fight.

33.b4 ♔f6 34.♔d3 e4+

34...♔e7 35.c5 ♘b5 36.♔e4 f6 37.♘c4±.

35.♔d4 ♖e8 36.♖h1 ♔g6



37.b5!! axb5 38.c5 ♘c4?

Black hopes to find salvation in a rook endgame, but White's central majority proves too strong. 38...♘c8 is forced, e.g. 39.♖a1 b6 40.b4±.

39.♘xc4 bxc4 40.♖e1 f5 41.gxf5+ ♔xf5 42.♖e3 c6?! 43.d6 ♖e5 44.♔xc4 ♖d5 45.♖b3 ♔e5 46.♖xb7 ♖d4+ 47.♔c3 ♔d5 48.♖e7

48.d7!? ♖d3+ 49.♔b4 ♔e6 50.♔a5 ♖xd7 51.♖xd7 ♔xd7 52.♔b6 g5 53.b4+–.

48...♖d3+?!

Not the best defence, but in a correspondence game it does not matter much, as White is winning in any case:

A) 48...♔xc5?! 49.♖e5+ ♖d5 50.♖xd5+ cxd5 51.d7+–;

B) 48...♖c4+ 49.♔d2 ♖d4+ 50.♔e2 ♔xc5 51.d7 ♔b6 52.♔e3 c5 53.b4 ♖d3+ 54.♔xe4 c4 55.♖xg7 ♖d2 56.♖f7 ♔c7 57.f4 c3 58.♖f5 ♔xd7 59.♖c5 ♖e2+ 60.♔f5 ♖e3 61.g4+–.

49.♔b4

1-0

Vladimir Onischuk 2620
Axel Ornstein 2325
Stockholm 2016 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♗b3

The move played most often. We recommend 6.0-0.

6...d6 7.h3 ♗a7 8.♘bd2 ♘e7 9.0-0 ♘g6 10.d4 0-0 11.♖e1 b5

11...♖e8 and 11...h6 are the main moves here.

12.♘f1 c5

12...♗b7 13.♘g3 h6 14.♗c2 ♖e8 15.a4 is another main line.

13.dxe5

White heads for a typical endgame, which is objectively only equal.

After 13.♘g3 ♗b7 14.a4 ♖e8?! White's plan has more bite: 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♕xd8 and Rossi-Godena, Cremona ch-ITA 2005, was agreed drawn, but White is for choice, e.g. 16...♖exd8 17.c4 b4 18.♗g5 ♗b6 19.a5 ♗c7 20.♗c2 ♘f4 21.♘f5±.

13...dxe5 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.c4!

It is important to play against the bishop on a7.

15...♗e6 16.♘g5 ♗xc4 17.♗xc4 bxc4 18.♗d2 c3 19.♗xc3 c4?

Black misses the moment for 19...♘f4 20.♘f3 ♘d3 21.♖e2 ♘f4 22.♖ee1 ♘d3=.

20.♘f3 ♗d4 21.♖ac1 ♖ab8 22.♗xd4 exd4 23.e5

Even with so few pieces remaining, White's initiative does count, as the knights especially are more powerful.

23...♘e8?

23...♘h5 24.♖xc4 ♖xb2 25.♘xd4 ♘hf4 26.♘c6 ♖e8 limits the damage.

24.♖xc4 ♖xb2 25.♘xd4 ♖xa2 26.♘c6 ♖c8 27.♘e3 ♔f8 28.♘f5 ♖d2 29.♖ee4 ♖d5 30.g4 ♘xe5?

30...f6 31.f4± was called for.

31.♖xe5 ♖xc6 32.♖xe8+

1-0

Andrey Kovalev 2550
Andrey Nosov 2372
Alushta 2008 (11)

In the following endgame White's knight manoeuvre to c5 is typical:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♗b3 ♗b6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♘c4

Usually White castles first and then decides where to put this knight. For our main recommendation to transfer the knight to g3 via f1 see Chapter 6.2.

8...♘e7 9.0-0 ♘g6

10.♖e1!?

This is an interesting move, trying to get along without h2-h3 for now. White doesn't need to worry about a possible black attack with ...♘g4 as he can always exchange the bishop on b6. So playing without the thematic h2-h3 makes perfect sense here. **10.a4** is a logical move, but White has had problems proving any advantage in practice. In the following lines Black is very solid and always in time to push ...d6-d5. **10...c6 11.♘xb6 axb6** 11...♕xb6?! 12.a5 ♕c7 13.♗g5 ♘d7 14.d4± Ehlvest-Arngrimsson, Reykjavik 2010. **12.♗e3 h6 13.h3** White has basically always opted for this build-up in practice. **13...♖e8** 13...d5 14.♗c2 (14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.♗xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗xb6 ♘f4 17.c4 ♕xd3 18.♕xd3 ♘xd3 19.b3 ♖e8= Delchev-Granero Roca, Jaen 2014) 14...♖e8 15.b4 (15.♖e1!?) 15...♗e6 16.♖e1 ♕c7= Spasov-Marjanovic, Plovdiv 2015. **14.♖e1 d5** 14...♗e6 15.♗c2 d5 16.exd5 ♗xd5 17.d4 exd4 18.♘xd4 ♗e4= Ortiz Suarez-Morovic Fernandez, Varadero 2016. **15.♗c2 c5 16.b4!? cxb4 17.cxb4=** Hillarp Persson-Howel, London rapid 2015.

10...h6

A) **10...c6 11.♘xb6 axb6** 11...♕xb6 12.h3 h6 13.a4 ♖e8 14.a5 ♕c7 (Ye-Aung, Yangon 1999) 15.♗c2N d5 16.d4± should be slightly better for White due to his bishop pair. **12.d4**

♕**e7 13.**♗**c2** 13.h3 is more precise, as …♗g4 could be annoying at some point. **13…h6 14.**♗**e3** ♖**d8 15.h3 c5 16.**♘**d2**± Amanov-Akopian, Los Angeles 2013;

B) **10…**♗**e6**

analysis diagram

B1) 11.d4 (not wasting any time) 11…♗xc4 12.♗xc4 exd4 (Sandipan-Li Ruofan, Singapore 2007) 13.cxd4N d5 14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.♕b3 c6 16.♗d2 and the bishop pair secures White a small advantage;

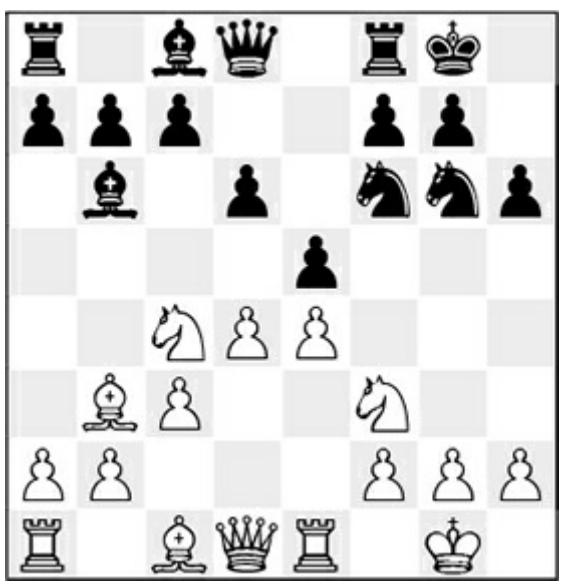
B2) **11.a4 c6 12.**♘**xb6** ♗**xb3** 12…♕xb6 13.♗c2 a5 14.h3 h6 15.d4 ♖ad8 (Pitl-Singer, Austria Bundesliga 2014/15) 16.b3N ♖fe8 17.c4±. **13.**♕**xb3** ♕**xb6** 13…axb6N 14.♗e3 gives White a slight initiative. **14.**♕**c2 h6 15.d4** ♕**c7 16.dxe5** 16.c4N, with a space advantage, is clearly more pleasant for White. **16…dxe5 17.**♗**e3** ♖**fd8 18.h3 c5 19.**♘**d2** ♘**h5 20.**♘**c4** ♘**hf4 21.**♖**ad1 b6 22.**♔**h2** ♖**e8?!** 22…♕e7N is an improvement, after which 23.f3 is level; 23.g3? is a mistake because of ♕e6! **23.g3** ♘**e6 24.**♖**d5**± Ramnath-Babujian, Hyderabad 2013;

C) **10…**♗**g4** is a loss of tempo, as bringing the bishop to h5 is dubious. **11.h3** ♗**h5?! 12.**♘**xb6** 12.d4N looks even better, e.g. 12…exd4 (12…♗xf3 13.♕xf3 h6 14.♗d2±) 13.♘xb6 axb6 14.cxd4±. **12…axb6 13.**♗**g5** ♗**xf3 14.**♕**xf3 h6 15.**♗**xf6** ♕**xf6 16.**♕**xf6 gxf6 17.g3** and White had a small advantage in Velicka-Simacek Decin ch-CZE 2009;

D) 10…♕e7 (Ushenina-Hoang Thi Bao Tram, Ningbo Wch tt W 2009) 11.d4N. There is no reason to delay this typical advance. White is slightly better, as 10…♕e7 doesn't seem to be as useful as other black moves.

11.d4

White follows the standard plan to delay h2-h3 and advance in the centre immediately.



11…♗g4?!

This is dubious as White can play h2-h3 with tempo. But other moves also don't seem to equalise for Black:

A) 11…♕e7 12.a4 c6 13.dxe5!? dxe5 14.♕d6 ♖e8 15.♕xe7 ♖xe7 16.♘xb6 axb6 17.♗e3 ♘xe4 18.♗xb6± Kosic-Cottegnie, ICCF email 2012;

B) 11…♗e6N 12.d5 ♗d7 13.♗c2±;

C) **11…c6?! 12.dxe5 ♘g4** (Gwaze-Amin, Windhoek ch-RSA 2007) 12…♘xe5N 13.♘cxe5 dxe5 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.♘xe5±. **13.♘xb6!N ♕xb6 14.exd6! ♕xf2+** 14…♘xf2 15.♕d4±. **15.♔h1±**;

D) 11…exd4 12.cxd4 d5?! 13.♘xb6 axb6 (Miroshnichenko-Kuderinov, Moscow 2015) 14.e5N ♘e4 15.♘d2±.

12.h3 ♗e6

12…♗h5? doesn't work because of 13.g4 ♘xg4 14.hxg4 ♗xg4 15.♕d3±, and White can unpin immediately.

13.a4

13.d5N ♗d7 14.♗c2± looks like a decent alternative. White gets the bishop pair as soon as he exchanges his knight on b6, as well as a space advantage. One plan could be to push the pawns on the queenside afterwards.

13…♗xc4

13…c6N 14.♘xb6 ♗xb3 15.♕xb3 ♕xb6 16.♕c2 is similar to Ramnath-Babujian, Hyderabad 2013, after 10…♗e6.

14.♗xc4 c6 15.dxe5

White wants to go into the endgame, but 15.♗d3N, holding the tension, seems more to the point. White should be slightly better with the bishop pair and the space advantage.

15…dxe5

15…♘xe5N 16.♘xe5 (16.♗b3!?) 16…dxe5 17.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 18.a5 ♗c5 19.b4 ♗e7 20.♗f1 is still a bit more pleasant for White, but is a better version of the endgame for Black because here without the white knight on f3 he can try to exchange his bishop via g5.

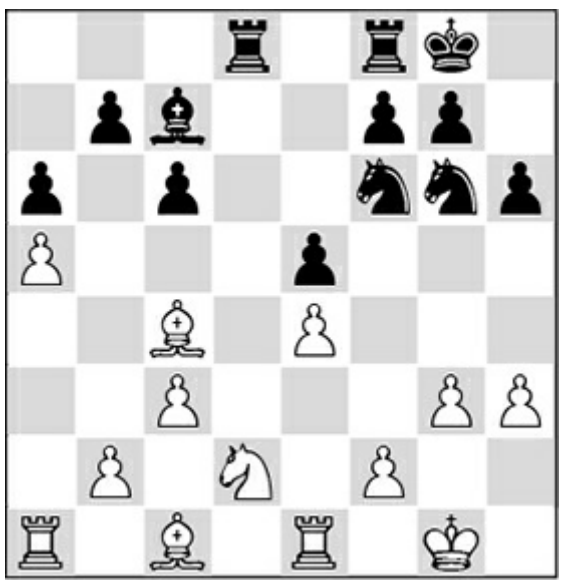
16.♕xd8 ♖axd8 17.a5± ♗c7 18.g3

A nice move to protect the square f4 and to prepare ♔g2 just in case.

18…a6?!

This seems dubious, as it fixes his own pawns and weakens the pawn on b7. 18…♖d7N 19.b4 ♖fd8 20.♔g2±.

19.♘d2!



White transfers the knight to c5 in order to attack the pawn on b7.

19…♖fe8?!

19…♘e8N 20.b4 ♘d6 21.♗f1±.

20.b4 ♘f8 21.♘b3 ♘e6?! 22.♗xe6 fxe6 23.♘c5± ♗b8?!

Giving up the pawn doesn't help. Black's position collapses very fast now. 23... ♖b8N 24.f3 ♗d6 25.♘d3 ♘d7 26.♖d1±.

24.♘xb7 ♖d3 25.♘c5!

White has a decisive advantage.

25...♖xc3 26.♗e3 ♖c4

26...♗d6N 27.♘xa6 ♘xe4 28.♗b6 ♘f6 29.♗c7+–.

27.♘xa6 ♖xe4 28.♖ec1 ♘d5 29.♗c5 ♔h7?!

29...♖e2N 30.♘xb8 ♖xb8 31.♗d6+–.

30.♖a2

The rook on e4 is trapped now.

30...♖c8 31.f3

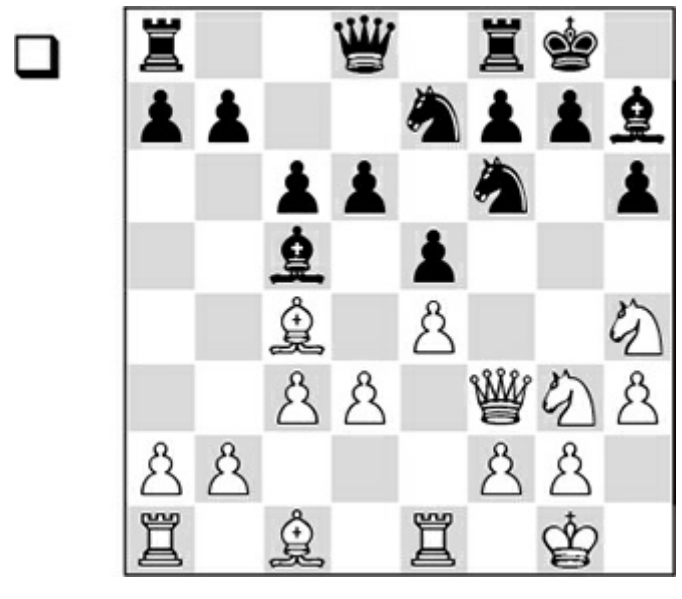
Black resigned.

In a lost position he will also lose the exchange.

Chapter 13
Tactical exercises

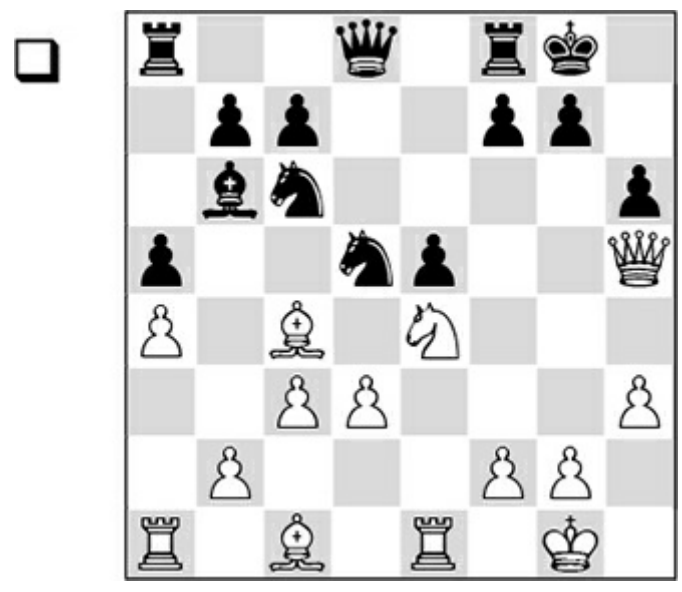
Tactical training can never hurt to keep the eye sharp. So we suggest that you solve all the exercises yourself first. Take your time and only then look at the solutions, where the full games are also given.

Exercise 1



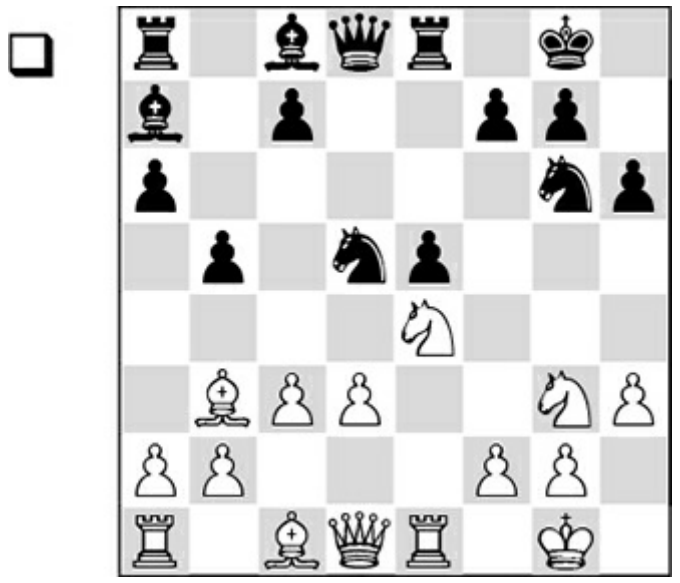
How to continue White's initiative?

Exercise 2



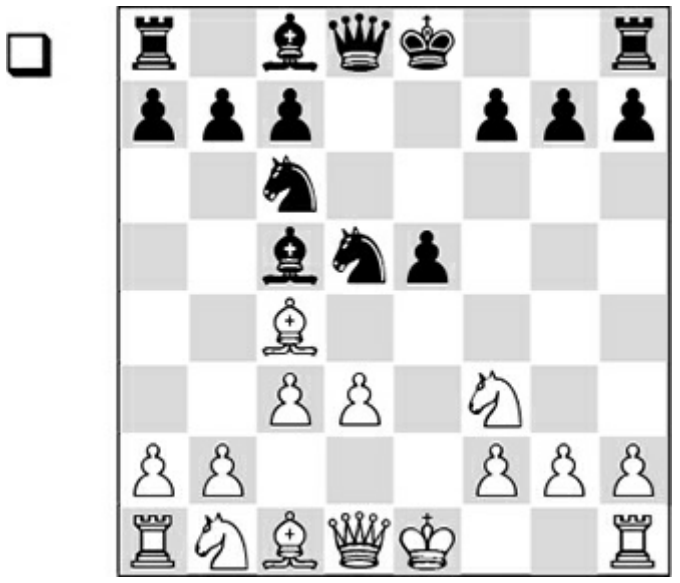
How to continue the kingside attack?

Exercise 3



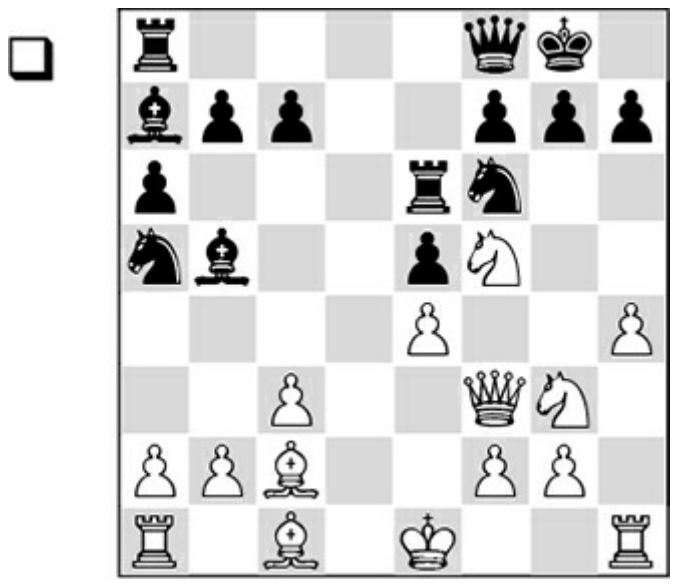
How to strike?

Exercise 4



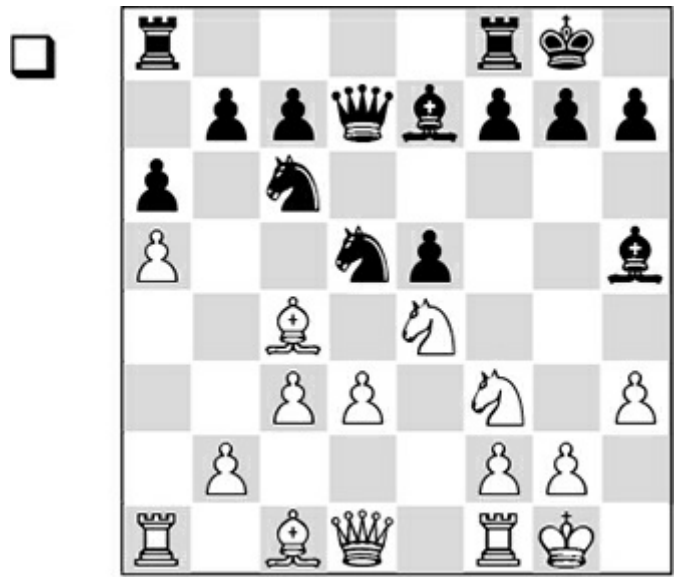
How to exploit Black’s early …d7-d5?

Exercise 5



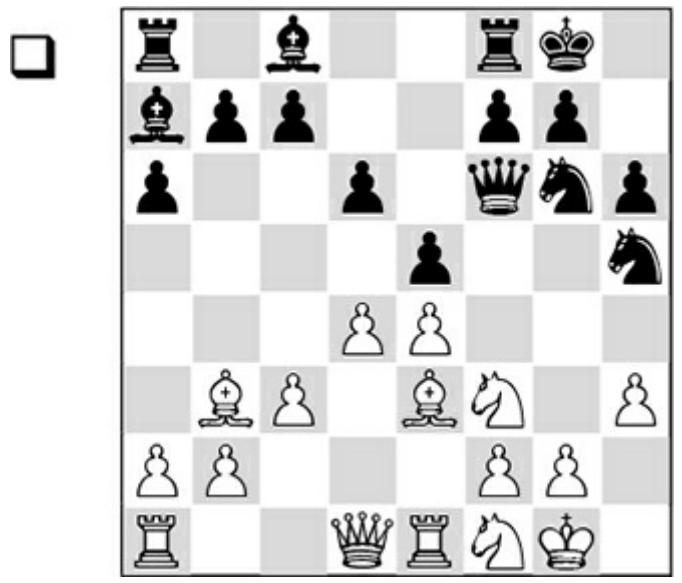
How to continue the attack on the kingside?

Exercise 6



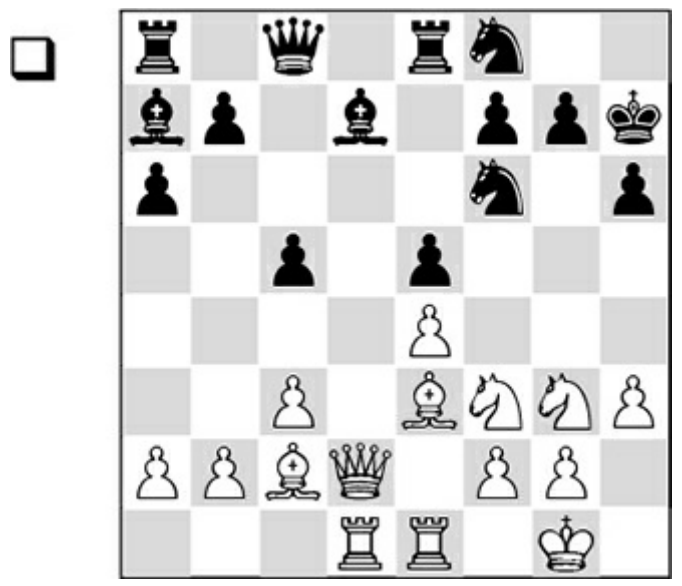
How to seize the opportunity?

Exercise 7



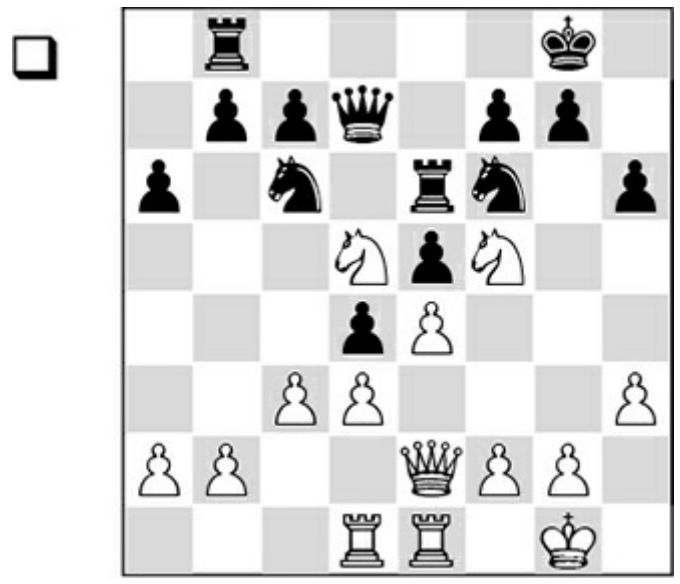
How to seize the moment?

Exercise 8



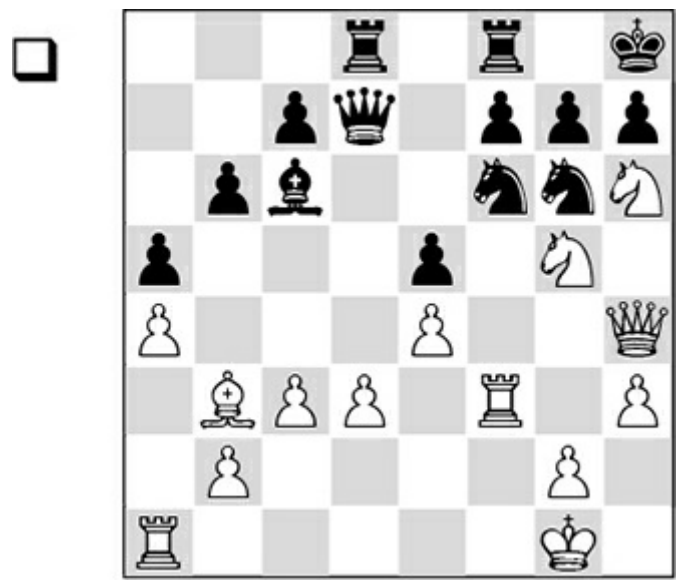
How to continue the kingside play?

Exercise 9



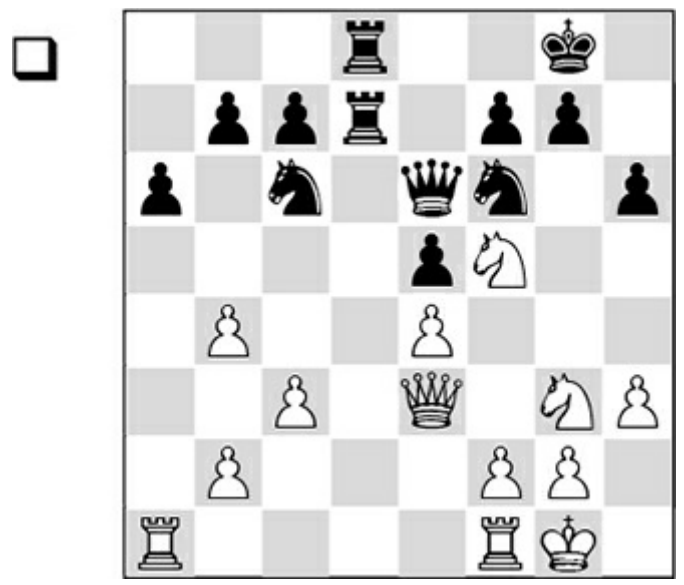
White to move and win in typical style.

Exercise 10



Where to strike?

Exercise 11



What is White’s priority?

Exercise 12

How to continue the attack?

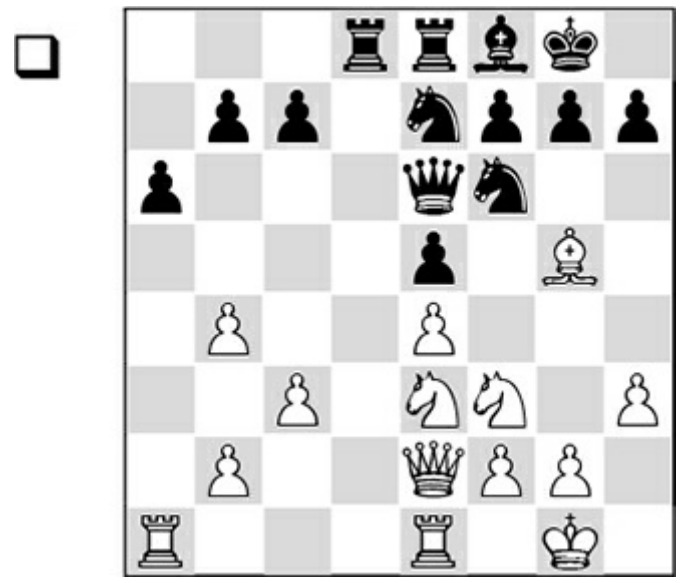
Exercise 13

How to attack on the kingside?

Exercise 14

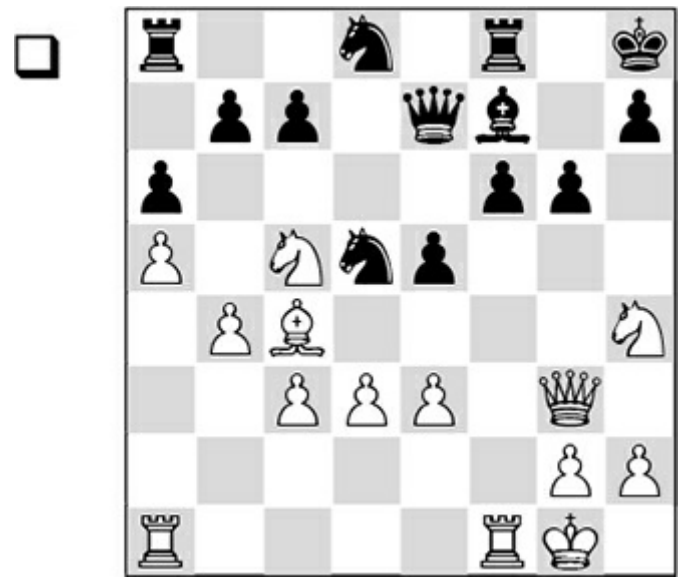
Where to strike?

Exercise 15



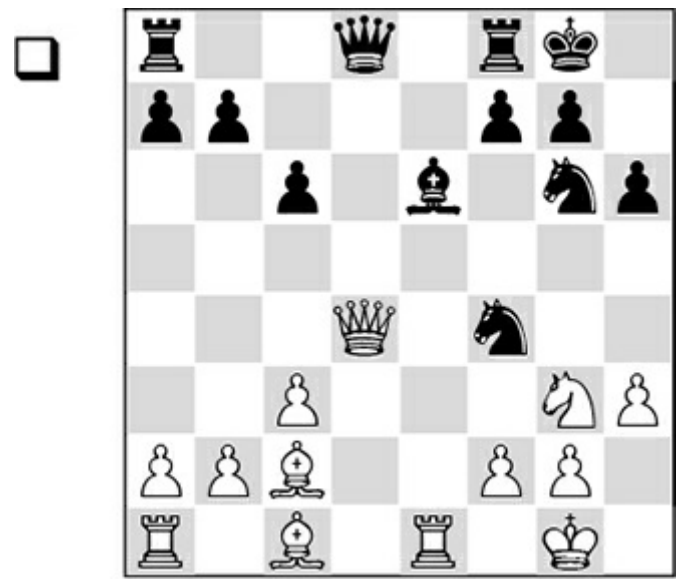
How to maintain White’s strategic initiative?

Exercise 16



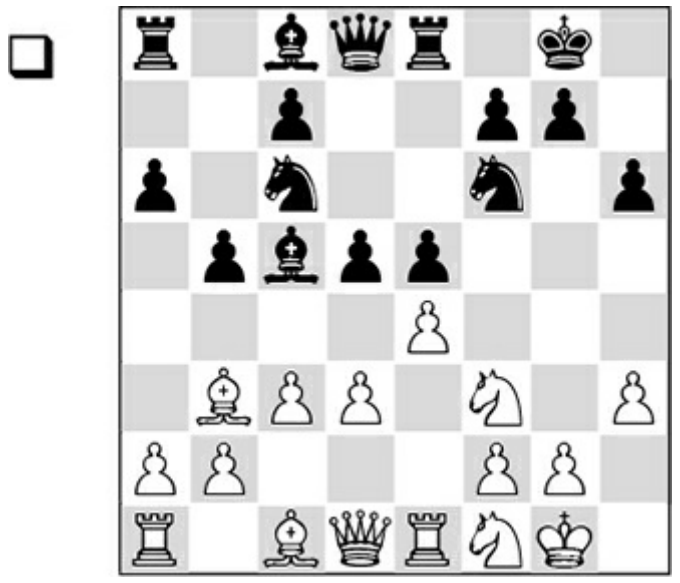
How to continue White’s attack?

Exercise 17



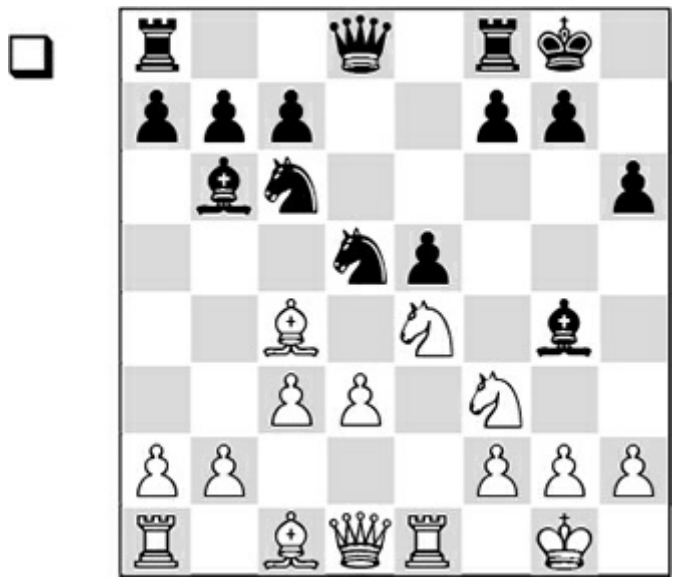
How to make use of the disharmony in Black’s camp?

Exercise 18



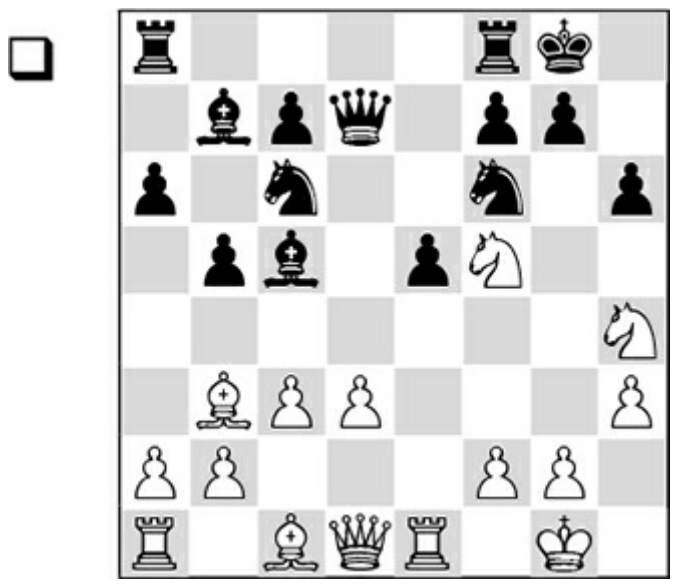
How to react to Black's central advance?

Exercise 19



How to exploit Black's careless play?

Exercise 20



How to continue the kingside play?

Exercise 21

What should White do and what is Black's best defence?

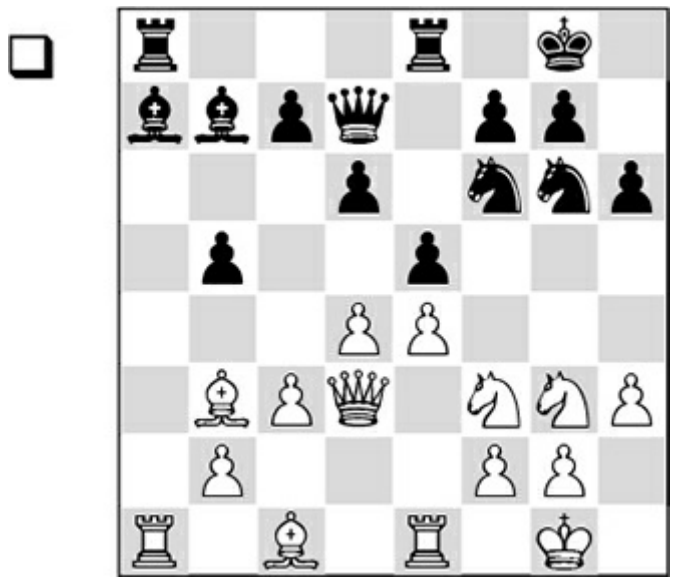
Exercise 22

Why was 15…♕d3? a mistake?

Exercise 23

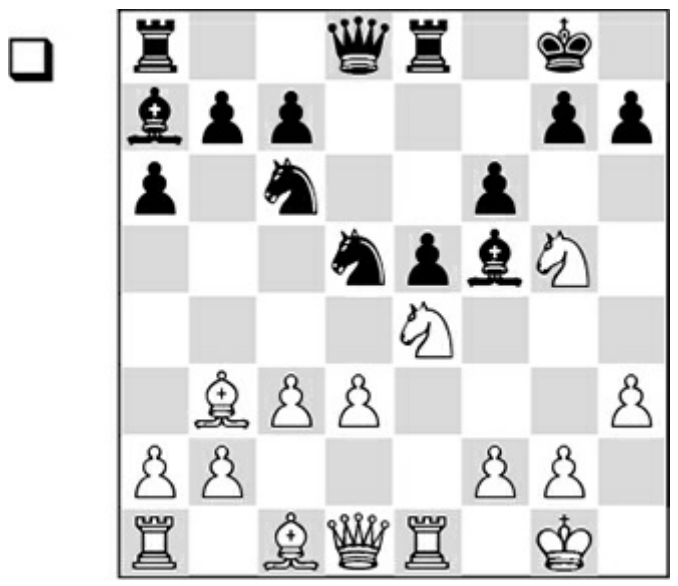
How to exploit the mistake 10…♗e6?

Exercise 24



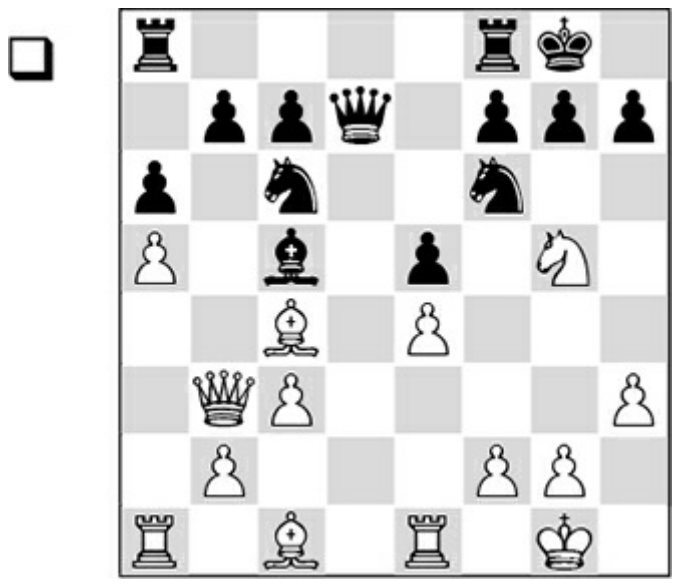
White missed an amazing shot. Can you do better?

Exercise 25



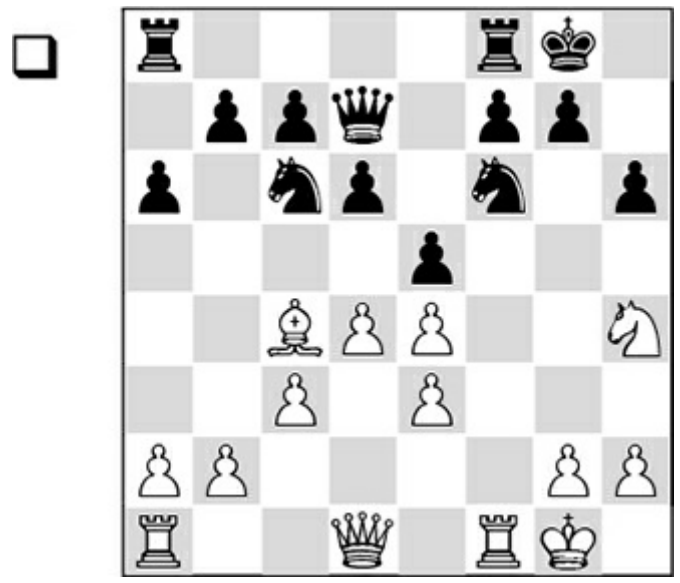
How to continue White's attack?

Exercise 26



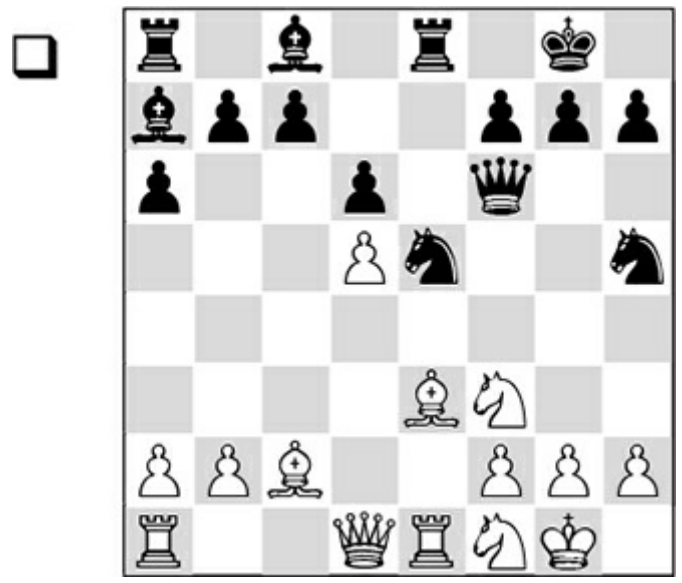
What had Black missed?

Exercise 27



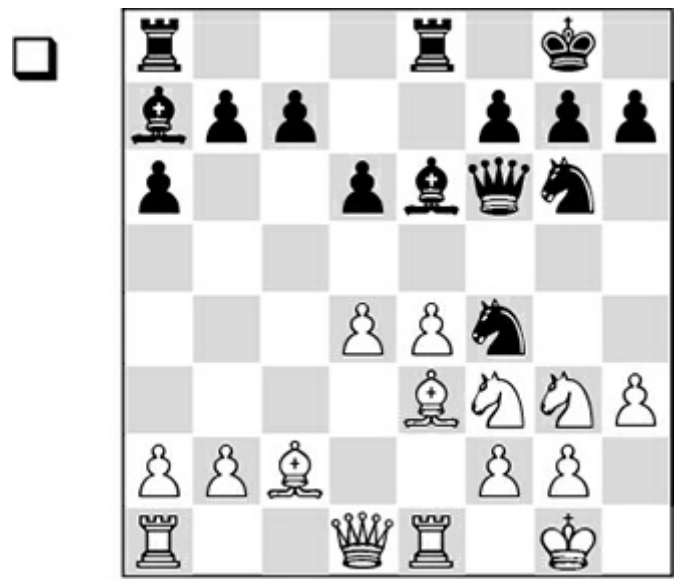
How to continue White's attack?

Exercise 28



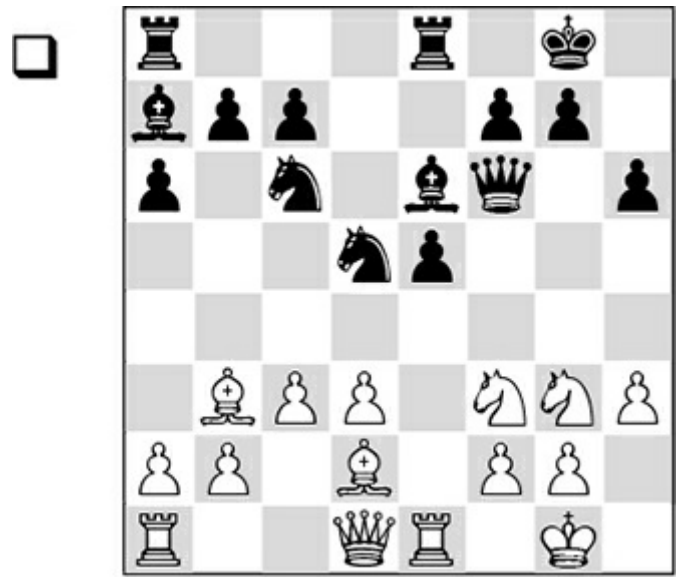
How to exploit the unprotected knight on h5?

Exercise 29



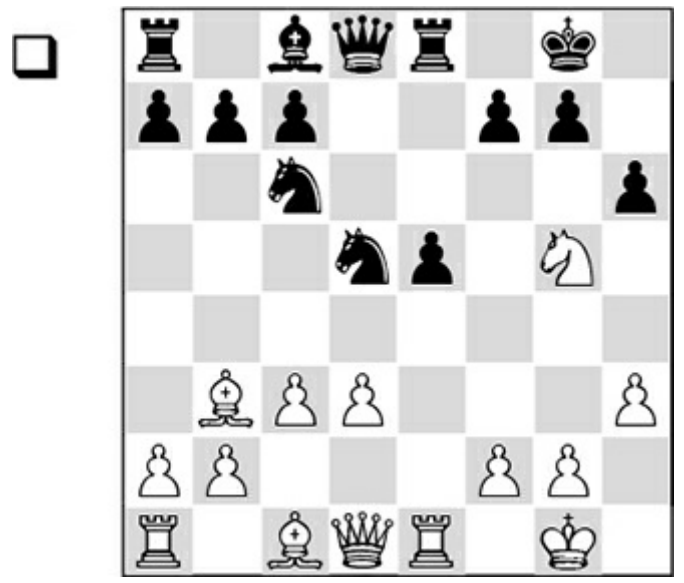
Which typical tactic wins for White?

Exercise 30



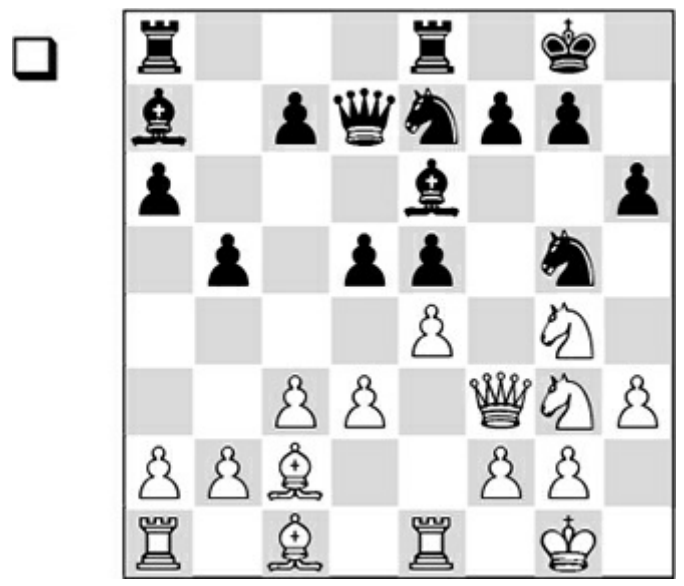
How to exploit the position of Black's queen?

Exercise 31



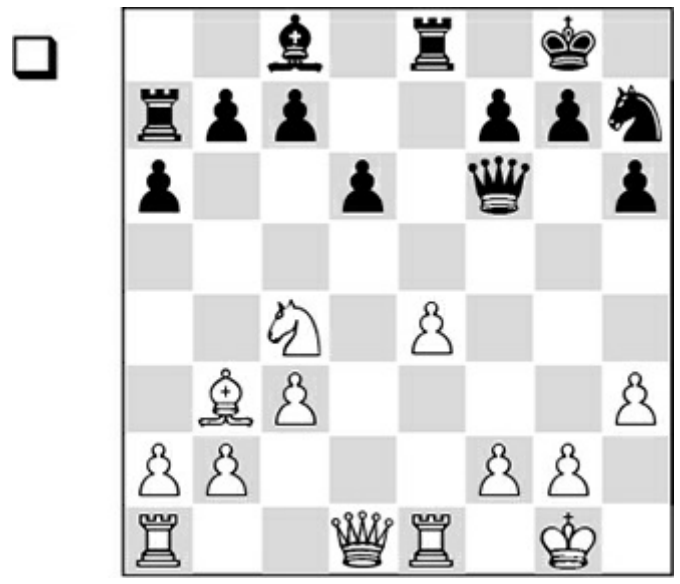
How to seize the moment?

Exercise 32



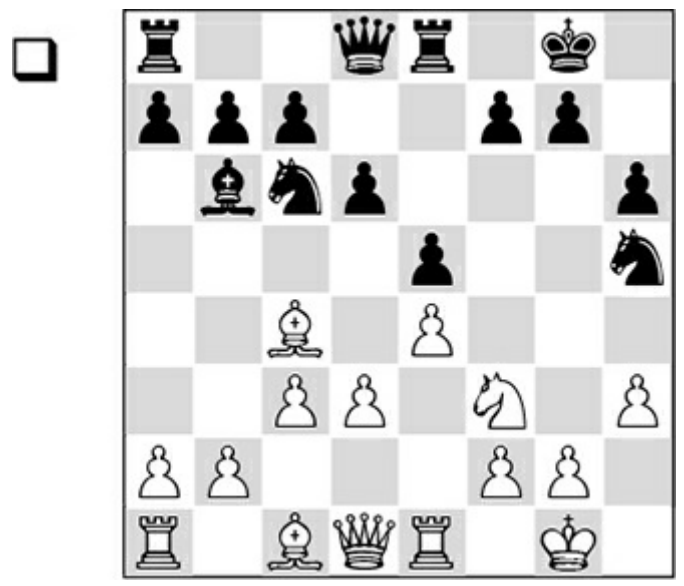
How to react?

Exercise 33



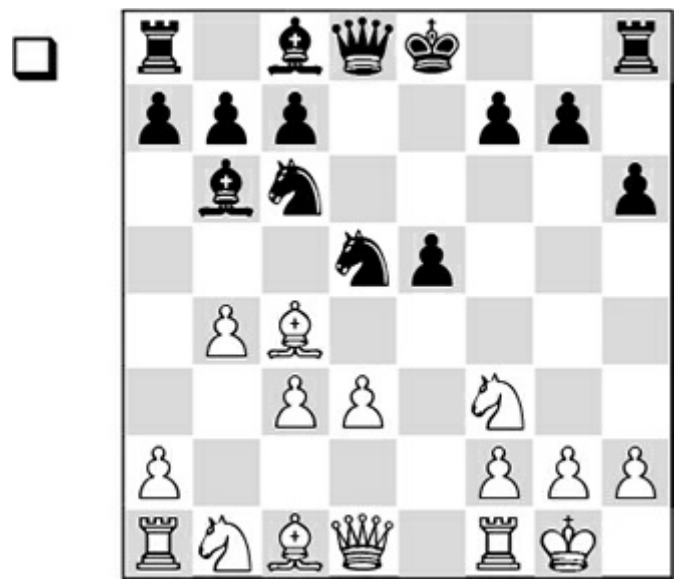
How to make use of White's initiative?

Exercise 34



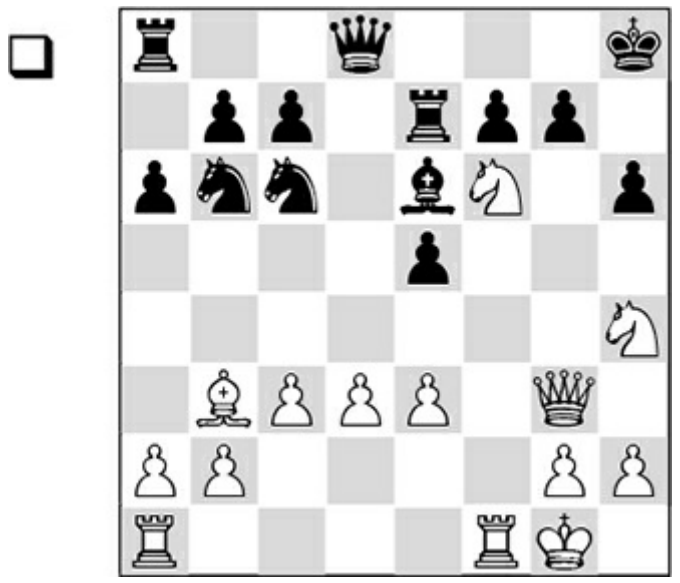
How to exploit the mistake 12…♘h5?

Exercise 35



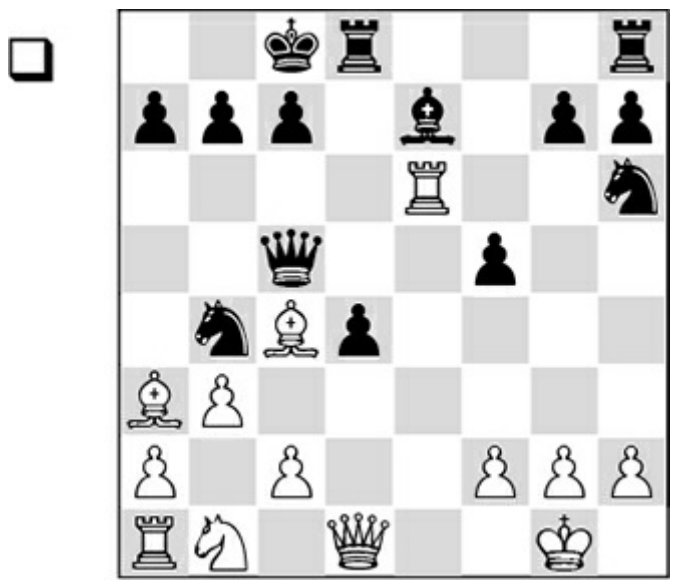
How to seize the moment?

Exercise 36



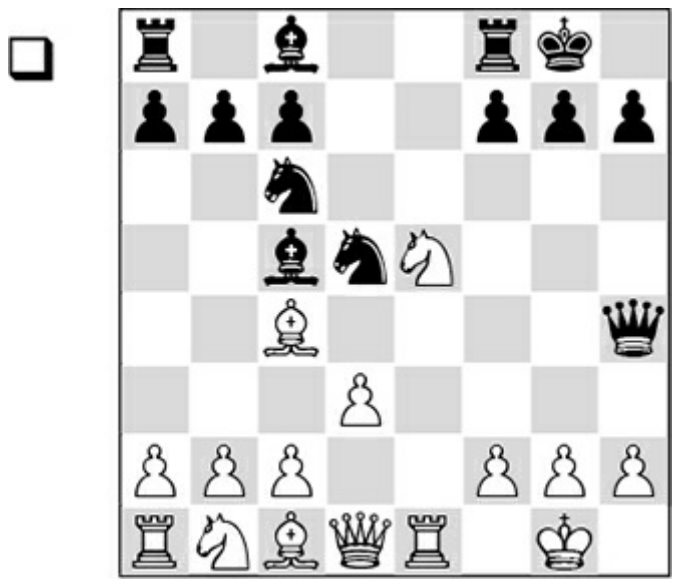
Show White’s point!

Exercise 37



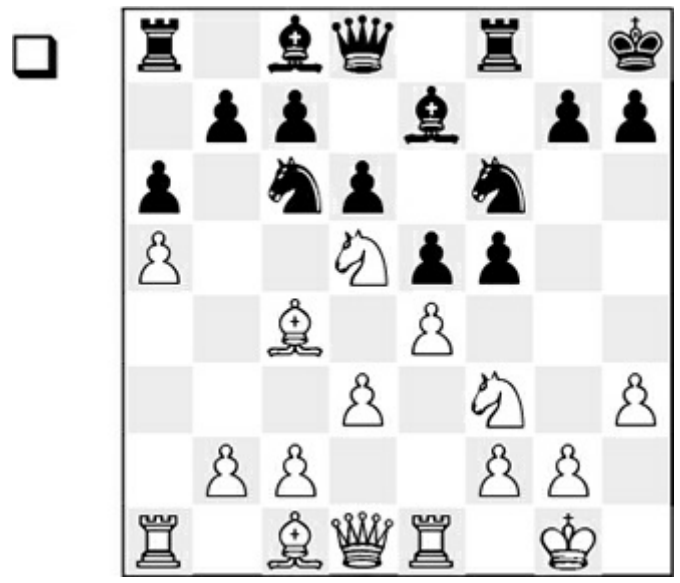
White has a forced sequence to gain a clear advantage. Can you find it?

Exercise 38



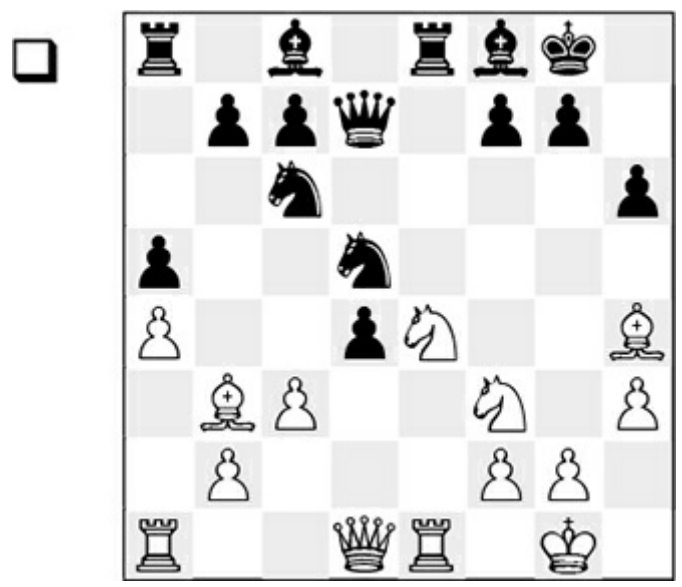
Black has sacrificed a pawn for a premature attack. How can White parry the threat and gain a clear advantage?

Exercise 39



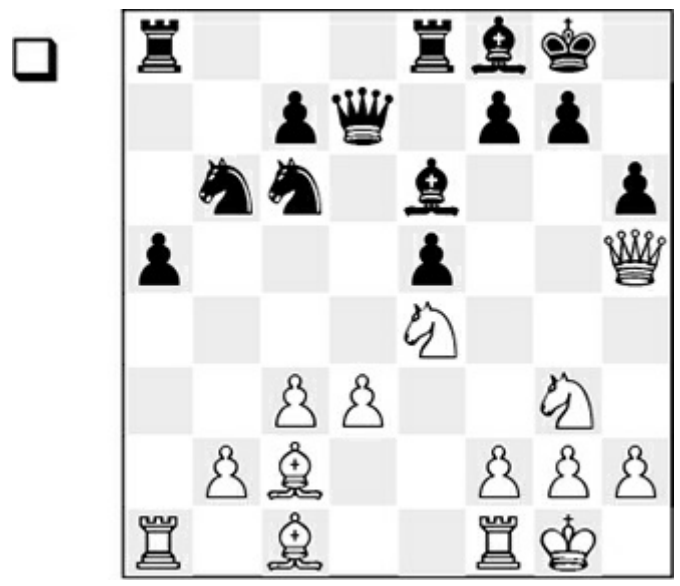
In this rare but quite important position from Chapter 3, White has a tactical solution at his disposal. Can you spot it?

Exercise 40



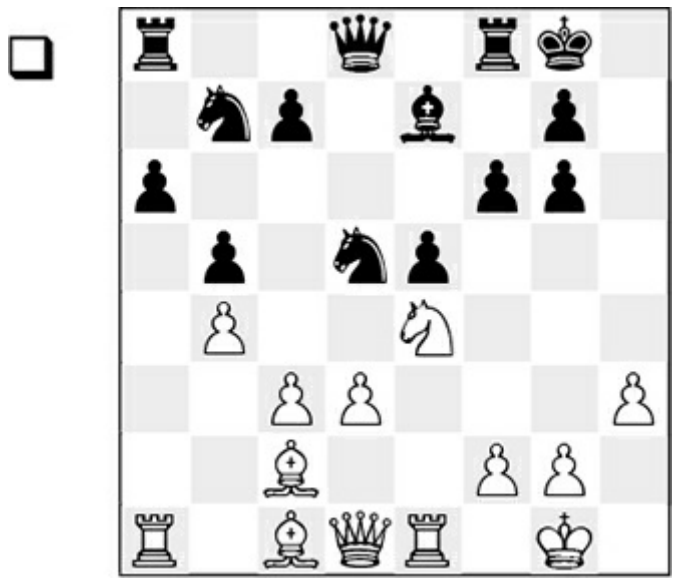
The last move was a mistake. How can White decide the game?

Exercise 41



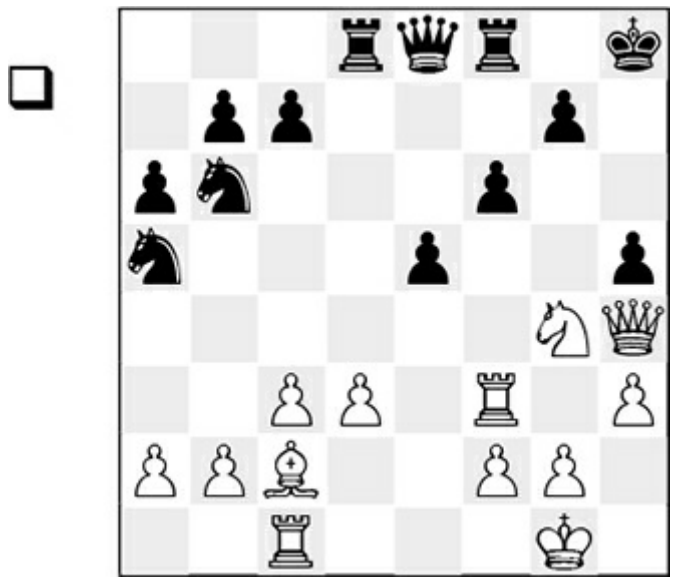
White is ready to attack. Where to start?

Exercise 42



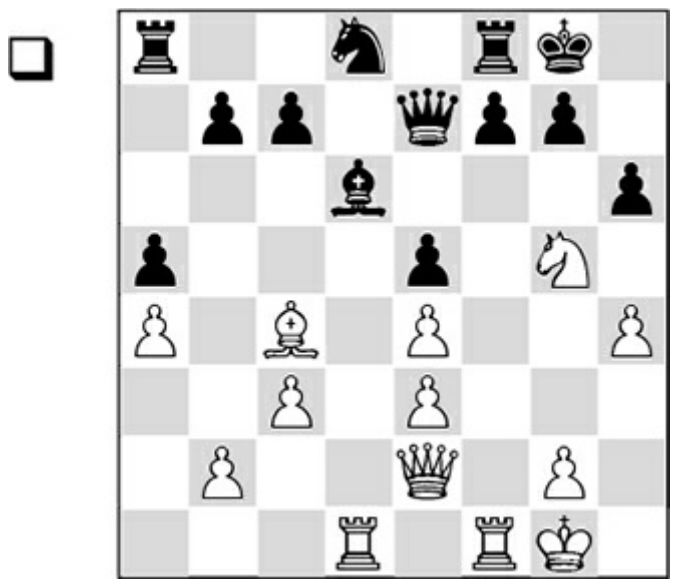
White can exploit the weakness of the light squares in Black's camp. How?

Exercise 43



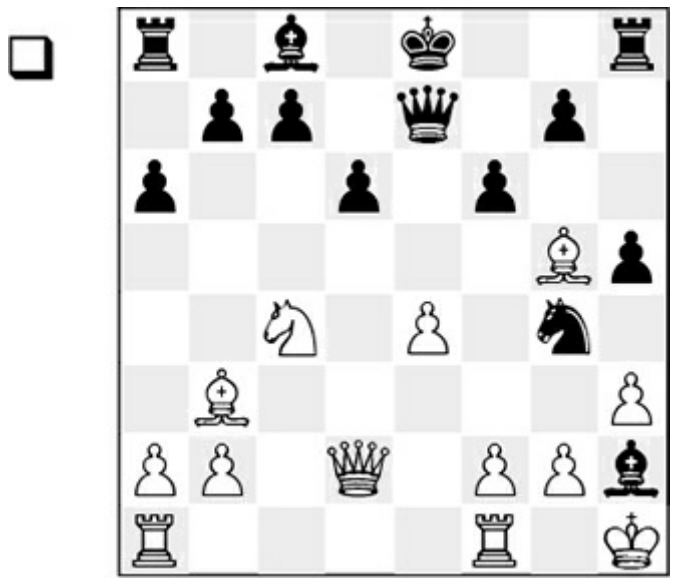
White has gathered most of his forces on the kingside. How did he continue the attack?

Exercise 44



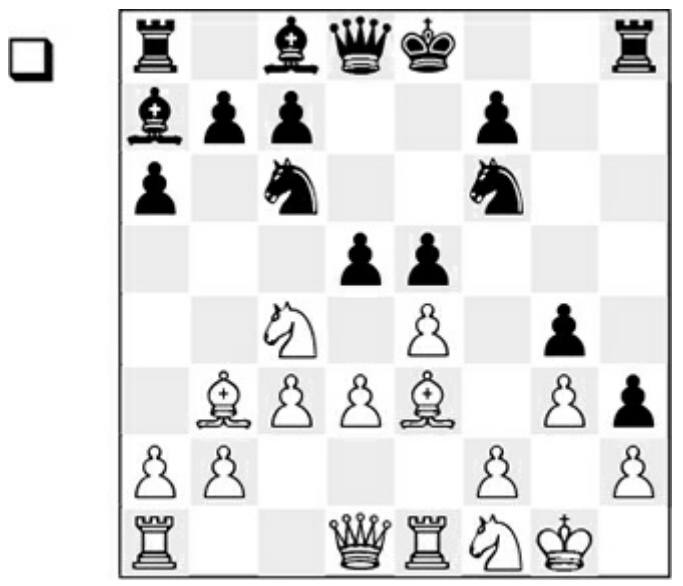
The young Hungarian grandmaster gives a taste of his combinational skills. Can you do the same?

Exercise 45



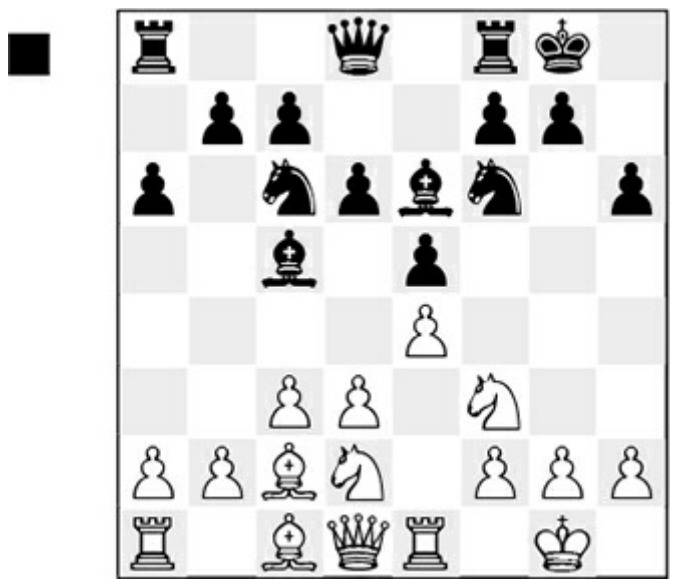
How can White exploit his lead in development in this rather chaotic position?

Exercise 46



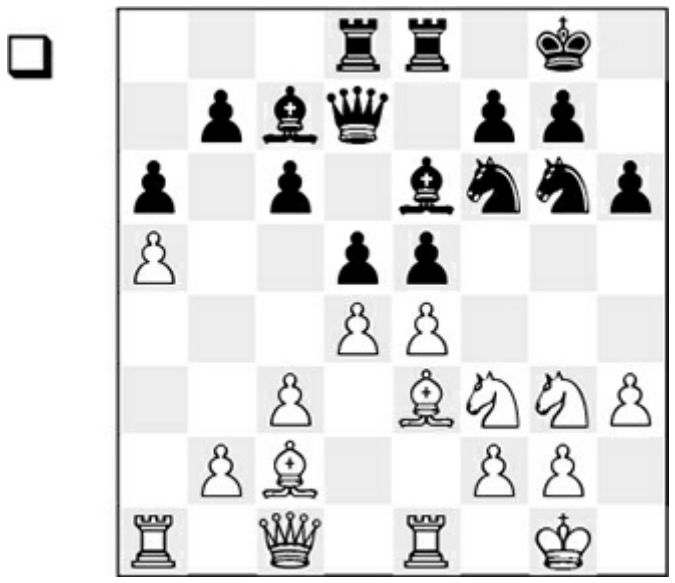
Black attacked regardless of the consequences. How could White have punished Black's play?

Exercise 47



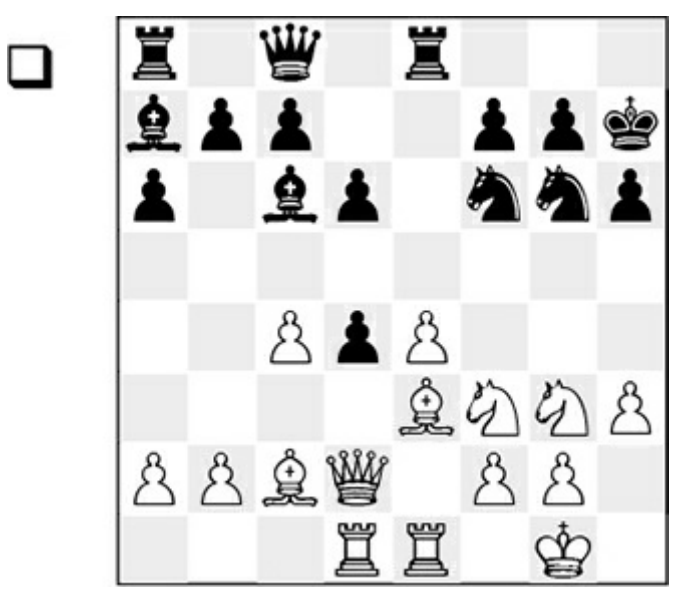
White's last move was a mistake, why?

Exercise 48



This is quite a typical situation in the lines where Black transfers his knight to g6. How can White attack the black kingside?

Exercise 49



How would you continue with white?

Typical strategies

Exercise 50

How to continue?

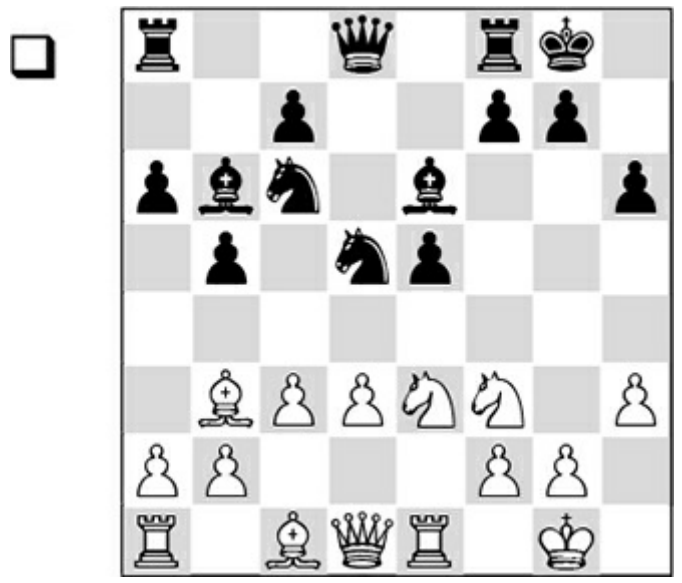
Exercise 51

How to use White's initiative?

Exercise 52

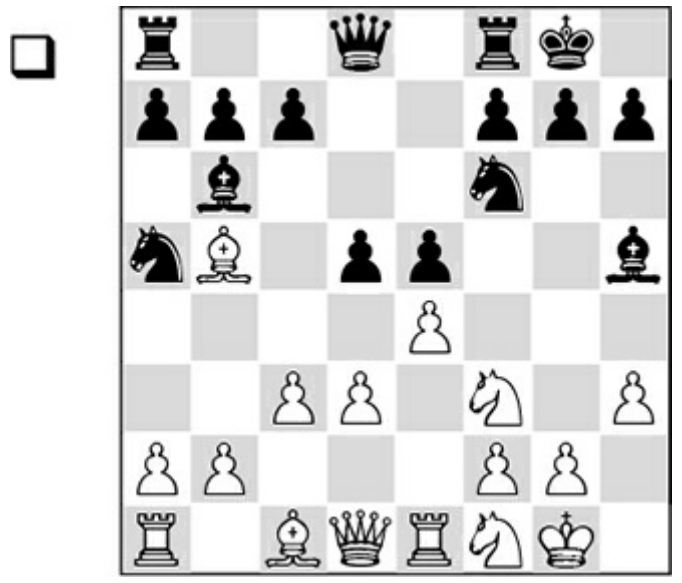
To play statically or dynamically?

Exercise 53



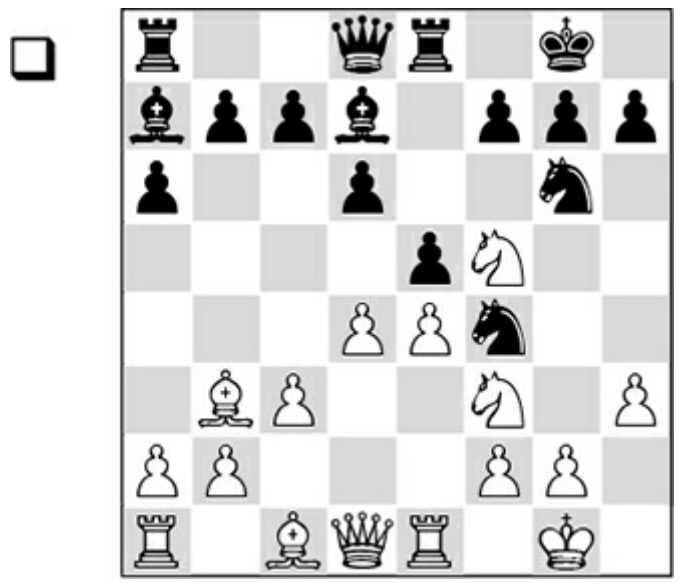
How to continue White's initiative?

Exercise 54



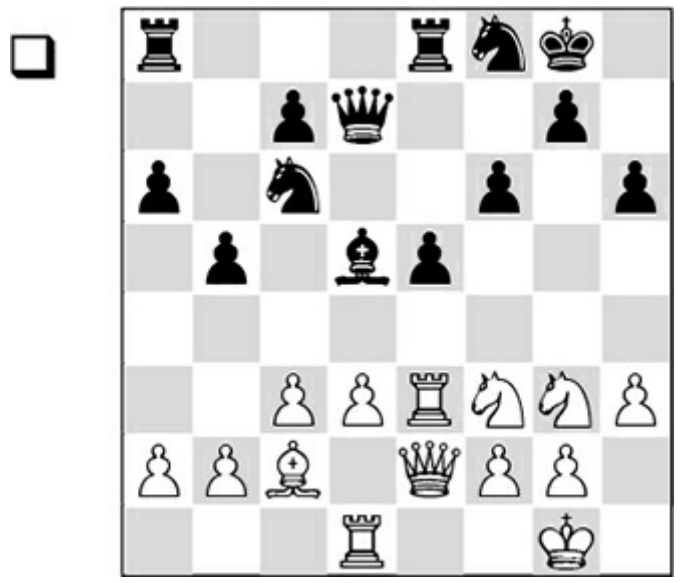
How to deal with the pin?

Exercise 55



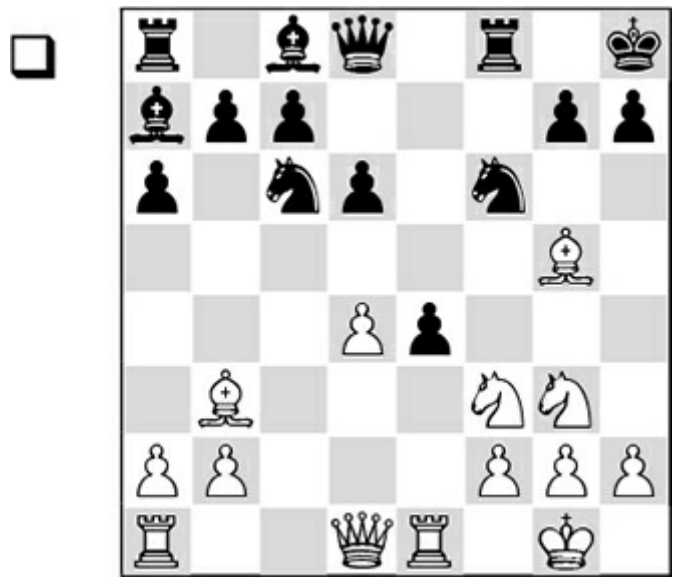
How to deal with Black's knights?

Exercise 56



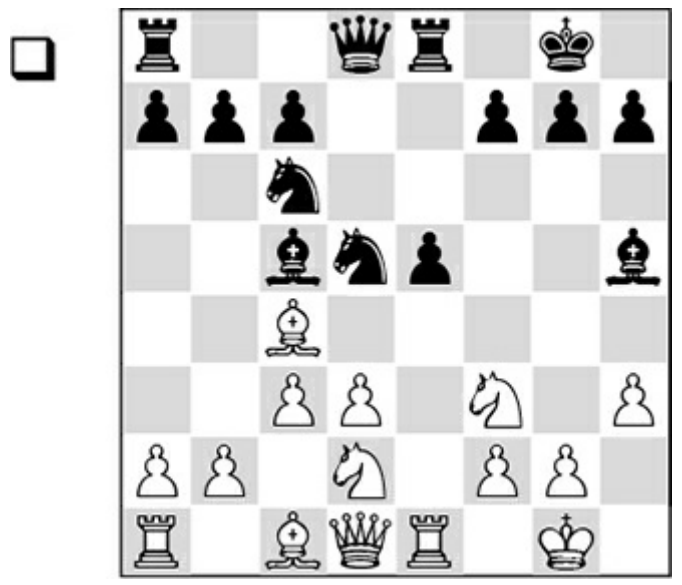
How to continue White's strategy?

Exercise 57



How to take back on e4?

Exercise 58



To play 11.♘e4 or 11.d4 now?

Exercise 59

❑

In this important position from Chapter 3 we suggest a new move. How should White react after the last waiting moves from Black, 10…h6 and 11…a6?

Chapter 14
Solutions

Solution 1

Slavik Sarchisov 1842
Polly Lambert
Mureck jr 2007 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 ♗g4 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♖e1 h6 9.♘f1 ♘e7 10.h3 ♗h5?!

10...♗e6 is called for.

11.♘g3 ♗g6 12.♘h4 ♗h7 13.♕f3 c6?

14.♗xh6! gxh6?!

14...d5 15.♗b3 a5 16.♗g5 ♘e8 17.♘hf5±.

15.♕xf6 ♘g6 16.♕xd8 ♖axd8 17.♘hf5

and White went on to win.

Solution 2

Vitaly Tseshkovsky 2576
Irina Sudakova 2376
Biel op 2006 (11)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6

With this move order White also should have a repertoire against 3...c6.

4.♘f3 ♗c5 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 ♗g4 7.h3

When White has castled and Black has not, this is always a bit risky.

7...♗h5 8.♖e1 h6 9.a4 a5 10.♘bd2 0-0

10...g5 is more critical.

11.♘f1 d5?!

Black is not prepared for this break here.

12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♘g3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 ♘de7 15.♘e4

15.♕h5!?+–.

15...♗b6 16.♕h5 ♘d5

17.♗xh6! ♘ce7

17...gxh6 18.♕xh6 (even stronger than 18.♗xd5, which wins as well, of course) 18...♘ce7 19.♘g5+–.

18.♕xe5

18.♕g4!?+–.

18...f6

18...gxh6 19.♗xd5 ♘xd5 20.♕xd5 ♕xd5 21.♘f6++–.

19.♕e6+ ♔h7 20.♗d2 ♖e8 21.♕f7 c6 22.♗e3 ♗xe3 23.♖xe3 ♘g6 24.♗xd5 cxd5 25.♖g3

1-0

Solution 3

Vasil Spasov 2578

Jure Borisek 2508

Turin ol 2006 (12)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗c5 5.c3 d6 6.0-0 a6 7.♗b3

Our main recommendation here is 7.♘bd2.

7...0-0 8.♘bd2 ♗a7 9.h3 ♘e7 10.♖e1 ♘g6 11.♘f1 b5?! 12.♘g3 ♖e8 13.♘g5 d5?!

13...♖f8 limits the damage.

14.exd5 h6 15.♘5e4 ♘xd5?!

16.♗xh6!

A) 16.♗xd5? ♕xd5 17.♕f3 (17.♗xh6? runs into 17...f5 18.♕h5 ♕c6 19.♘xf5 ♗xf5 20.♕xf5 ♖f8 21.♕h5 gxh6 22.♕xh6 ♖ad8 when only Black can be better) 17...♔f8 and Black defends;

B) 16.♘h5? ♗e6 17.d4 ♔f8 and 16.♕h5? ♗e6 17.♗xh6 ♘df4 18.♗xf4 ♘xf4 19.♕f3

♕xd3 20.♗xe6 ♕xf3 21.♗xf7+ ♔f8 22.gxf3 ♔xf7 are better for White, but not as good as the game.

16...♘df4

16...gxh6? 17.♗xd5 ♕xd5? 18.♘f6++–.

17.♗xf4 exf4

17...♘xf4 18.♘h5 ♕h4 19.♘xf4 ♕xf4 20.♕h5 ♗e6 21.d4 exd4 22.♘g5 ♕f5 23.g4+–.

18.♘h5 ♗e6 19.d4 ♕h4 20.♕f3 ♖ad8

And now instead of

21.♘d2?

after which White went on to win later anyway, 21.g3 fxg3 22.fxg3 ♕xh3 23.♘g5+– decides the day.

Solution 4

Andreas Tzermiadianos 2454
Spyridon Zamit 2061
Athens 1999 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d5 6.exd5 ♘xd5?

7.♕b3 ♘a5 8.♕b5+

1-0

Solution 5

John Emms 2502
David Ledger 2252
England tt 2006 (9)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♗b3

We mainly recommend 6.0-0.

6...d6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.h3 ♗a7 9.♘f1 d5 10.♕e2 ♕d6 11.♘g3 ♘a5 12.♗c2 dxe4 13.dxe4 ♗d7 14.♘h4 ♗b5 15.♕f3 ♖fe8?

15...♕e6 is called for.

16.♘hf5

16.♗g5± is also very strong.

16...♕f8 17.h4 ♖e6?

18.♘xg7!! ♔xg7

18...♕xg7 19.♘f5 ♕g6 20.h5 ♘xh5 21.♖xh5+–.

19.♗h6+ ♔xh6 20.♘f5+ ♔g6 21.♕g3+ ♔h5 22.♕g5#

1-0

Solution 6

Ante Brkic 2508

Mario Schachinger 2444

Zadar 2015 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.0-0 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.a4 a6 9.♘bd2 ♗g4

For more details here see Chapter 4.2.

10.h3 ♗h5 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.a5 ♕d7?

13.♘xe5! ♘xe5 14.♕xh5 ♘xc4 15.dxc4 ♘f6 16.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 17.♕d5 ♕xd5 18.cxd5 ♖fd8 19.♖d1 ♖d7 20.♗e3 ♖ad8?! 21.c4 ♗xb2?! 22.♖ab1 ♗e5

22...♗c3 23.♖xb7 ♗xa5 24.♖a1+–.

23.f4

23.♖xb7!?.

23...♗c3 24.♖xb7 f5

24...♗xa5?! 25.♖a1 ♗c3 26.♖xa6+–.

25.♖b3 ♗f6 26.♗c5 ♖e8 27.♖e3 ♖xe3 28.♗xe3 ♗c3?! 29.♔f2 ♔f7 30.♔e2 ♗xa5 31.♖a1 ♗c3 32.♖xa6 ♗f6 33.♔d3 ♔e8 34.♗d4 ♗d8 35.♗e5 g5 36.♖a8 ♔f7 37.♖c8 g4 38.♔d4 ♗f6 39.♔c5 gxh3 40.gxh3 ♗d8 41.♔c6 ♔e8 42.♗xc7

1-0

Solution 7

Jonny Hector 2499
Benjamin Foo 2183
London 2015 (9)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 a6 6.♗b3

We recommend mainly 6.0-0.

6...0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.♗e3

We recommend 8.♘bd2 but Hector's approach is also interesting.

8...♗a7

8...♗xe3 9.fxe3 ♘e7 (9...d5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♕e1) 10.♘bd2 leads to a different kind of position.

9.♘bd2 h6 10.♖e1 ♘h5 11.♘f1 ♕f6 12.h3 ♘e7 13.d4 ♘g6?

14.♘xe5! dxe5

14...♘xe5 15.♕xh5 ♘d3 16.♖e2+–.

15.♕xh5 exd4 16.cxd4 ♘f4

16...♗xd4? 17.♗xd4 ♕xd4 18.♕xg6+–.

17.♗xf4?!

17.♕d1!? is much stronger according to the computer.

17...♕xf4 18.♖ad1 ♗e6 19.g3 ♕f6 20.e5 ♕g5 21.♕xg5 hxg5 22.♔g2

22.♗xe6!? fxe6 23.♘h2 ♖ad8 24.♔g2 ♗xd4 25.♖e2 ♖d5 26.♘f3 c5 27.♖de1±.

22...♗xb3 23.axb3 c6 24.♘e3 ♖ad8 25.♘f5 ♖d7 26.♖d3 ♖fd8 27.♖ed1 g6 28.♘d6 ♗b8 29.d5 cxd5 30.♖xd5 ♔f8 31.♔f3 ♔e7?

31...f6 was the last chance to fight.

32.♔g4 ♔e6?

This runs into an amazing knight attack. But Black should be lost in any case.

33.♘xf7! ♖xd5 34.♘xd8+ ♔xe5 35.♘f7+ ♔e6 36.♘xg5+ ♔d6 37.♘f7+ ♔e6 38.♘d8+ ♔e5 39.f4+ ♔e4 40.♖xd5 ♔xd5 41.♘xb7 ♔c6 42.♘d8+ ♔b5 43.♔g5 ♗d6 44.♔xg6 ♔b4 45.♘b7 ♗f8 46.♔f7 ♗h6 47.h4 ♔b5 48.h5 ♔b4 49.♔g6

1-0

Solution 8

Georgios Souleidis 2440
Peter Acs 2542
Bundesliga 2008/09 (10)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.♗b3

7.♘bd2 is our main recommendation.

7...a6 8.h3 ♗a7 9.♘bd2 ♘e7 10.♖e1 ♘g6 11.♘f1 h6 12.♘g3 ♗d7?!

Very slow and tame.

13.d4 ♖e8 14.♗c2 ♕c8 15.♗e3 c5 16.♕d2 ♔h7 17.♖ad1 ♘f8?

17...♖d8 is called for.

18.dxe5 dxe5

19.♘xe5!

Clearing the path for White's attack. 19.♘h4? ♗e6 20.♘hf5 ♖d8 21.♕c1 is also better for White but of course not as good as the game.

19...♖xe5 20.f4 ♖e6 21.e5+ ♔g8 22.exf6 ♖xf6 23.f5

23.♘e4!?+–.

23...♖b6 24.b3 ♗b8 25.♗f4 a5?!

25...♗xf4 26.♕xf4 ♕b8 offers more resistance.

26.♖e7 ♗xf4 27.♕xf4 ♕d8 28.♕e5 ♕b8 29.♕xb8 ♖xb8 30.♖dxd7 ♘xd7 31.♖xd7 ♖e8 32.♗e4 a4 33.♗d5 ♖f6 34.♖xb7 ♖e3 35.♔h2 a3 36.♖a7 h5 37.h4 ♔f8 38.♖xa3 g6 39.♖a8+ ♔g7 40.♖a7 ♔f8 41.a4 ♖e5 42.c4

1-0

Solution 9

Ivan Saric 2394

Aleksandar Toth 2280

Balatonlelle Ech tt jr 2006 (6)

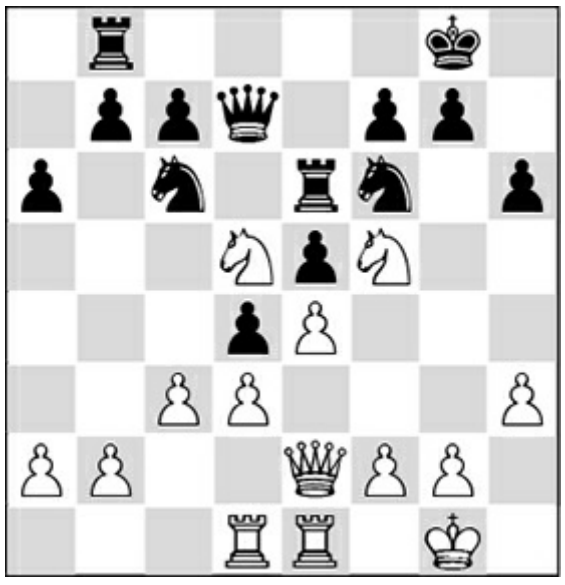
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♗b3 a6 8.♘bd2 ♗a7 9.♘c4

Another interesting main line. Our main recommendation is 9.h3.

9...h6 10.♖e1 ♗e6 11.♗e3 ♖e8 12.♗xa7 ♖xa7 13.h3 ♖a8 14.♘e3 ♗xb3 15.♕xb3 ♖b8 16.♖ad1 ♕d7 17.♘h4 ♘a5?! 18.♕c2 d5?

Black is not prepared for this advance here. 18...♘c6 is more circumspect.

19.♘hf5 ♘c6 20.♕e2 d4 21.♘d5 ♖e6?



22.♘xf6+! ♖xf6 23.♕g4

The typical decisive double attack.

23...♖xf5

23...g6? 24.♘xh6++–.

24.exf5 f6 25.f4 ♖d8 26.fxe5 ♘xe5 27.♕xd4 ♕xd4+ 28.cxd4 ♖xd4 29.♖e4 ♖d7 30.♔f2 ♔f7 31.♔e2 ♘c6 32.d4 ♘e7 33.g4 ♘d5 34.♔f3 ♖d8 35.h4 ♖h8 36.♖d3 ♖b8 37.♖b3 b6 38.♖d3 a5 39.♖d1 ♖d8 40.♖de1 ♖a8 41.a3 ♖d8 42.♔e2 ♔f8 43.♔d3 ♔f7 44.♔c4 ♔f8 45.♔b5 ♔f7 46.h5 ♔f8 47.♔c6 ♖d6+ 48.♔b7 ♖d8 49.♖c1

1-0

Solution 10

Dibyendu Barua 2525

Chanda Sandipan 2543

Kolkata 2004 (11)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.♗b3 0-0 8.♗e3

An interesting option. We recommend 8.♘bd2.

8...♗xe3 9.fxe3 ♘e7 10.♘bd2 ♘g6 11.a4 a5 12.h3 ♕e7 13.♖f2 ♗e6 14.♗c2 d5 15.exd5 ♗xd5 16.e4 ♗c6 17.♘c4 b6 18.♘e3 ♖fe8?

18...♗d7 is called for.

19.♘f5 ♕d7 20.♗b3 ♖ad8?

This loses, but good advice is hard to give.

21.♘g5 ♖f8 22.♕f3 ♘f4 23.♕g3 ♘6h5 24.♕h4 ♘f6 25.♖f3

25.♖xf4!? exf4 26.♘f3 ♗d5 27.♕g5+–.

25...♘g6?! 26.♘h6+ ♔h8

27.♖xf6!

27.♘hxf7+? ♖xf7 28.♕xh7+ ♘xh7 29.♘xf7+ ♕xf7 30.♖xf7 ♗d7 is also better for White, but not completely clear.

27...gxf6 28.♕f2 ♔g7 29.♘f5+ ♔h8 30.♘xh7 ♔xh7 31.♕f3 ♘f4 32.♕g4 ♘e6 33.♕h4+ ♔g8 34.♖f1 ♗xe4 35.dxe4 ♕d2 36.♘e7+ ♔g7 37.♕xf6+ ♔h7 38.♕f5+ ♔h6 39.♗xe6 ♕g5 40.♕xg5+ ♔xg5 41.♗d5 ♖d6 42.♖f3 f6 43.♖g3+ ♔h5 44.♘f5 ♖d7 45.♗c4 ♖d2 46.♖g7

1-0

Solution 11

Jonathan Yu 2085

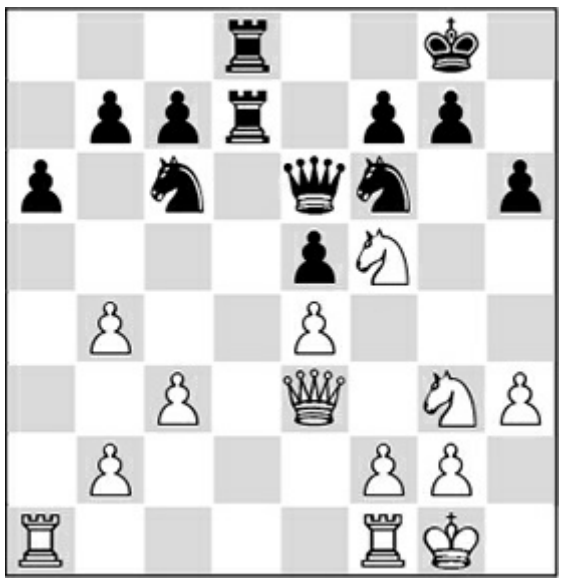
Wenlu Yu 1783

Aurora 2014 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♘bd2 0-0 7.♗b3 a6 8.h3 h6 9.♘f1

We recommend 9.0-0.

9...d5 10.♕e2 dxe4 11.dxe4 ♕e7 12.♘g3 ♗e6 13.0-0 ♖ad8 14.♘h4 ♗xb3 15.axb3 ♕e6 16.b4 ♗b6 17.♘hf5 ♖d7 18.♗e3 ♗xe3 19.♕xe3 ♖fd8?



20.♘xg7! ♔xg7 21.♘f5+ ♔g8

21...♔f8? 22.♕xh6+ ♔e8 23.♕h8+ ♘g8 24.♕xg8#.

22.♕g3+ ♘g4 23.♕xg4+ ♕g6 24.♘xh6+ ♔h7 25.♕xg6+ ♔xg6 26.♘f5 ♖d2 27.♖ab1 ♖8d3 28.♖fe1 ♔g5 29.♘e3

1-0

Solution 12

George Ardelean 2495

Ilie Uta 1806

Baile 2012 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♗c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗b3 d6 6.c3 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗h5 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♘f1 a5 10.a4 ♕e7 11.♘g3 ♗g6 12.0-0 ♘d8 13.♘h4 ♘e6 14.♘hf5 ♗xf5?! 15.♘xf5 ♕d7 16.♕f3 ♔h8

17.♘xg7! ♔xg7

17...♘xg7 18.♕xf6+–.

18.♗h6+ ♔g8

18...♔xh6? 19.♕xf6+ ♔h5 20.g4#.

19.♗xf8 ♘xf8 20.♕xf6

1-0

Solution 13

Teimour Radjabov 2744

Pentala Harikrishna 2669

Ningbo Wch tt 2011 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2 d6 7.c3 ♗b6 8.♗b3 ♘e7 9.h3 c6 10.♖e1 ♘g6 11.d4 h6 12.♗c2 ♗e6 13.♘f1 ♕c7 14.♗e3 ♖ad8 15.♕c1 ♖fe8 16.♘g3 ♕d7 17.a4 ♗c7 18.a5 a6 19.♖a4 ♕e7 20.c4 ♕f8?

20...d5 was called for, to get central counterplay.

21.d5 ♗d7 22.♖a3 ♖c8 23.♕d2 ♘e7 24.♗b1 ♖b8 25.♖b3 ♖ec8 26.♘h4 ♕d8 27.♖a3 ♘h7 28.♘hf5

28.c5!?.

28...♘xf5 29.exf5 ♕f8?

29...♕h4 is called for.

30.♘h5 ♗d8?

31.f6!

The most clear-cut way to open attacking paths. 31.♗xh6 gxh6 32.f6 wins as well. Even 31.♘xg7 ♕xg7 32.♗xh6 ♕f6 33.h4 comes into consideration.

31...♗xf6 32.♗xh6 ♕e7

32...gxh6 33.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 34.♘xf6++–.

33.♗xg7 ♗g5

33...♗xg7 34.♖g3+–.

34.f4 ♗h4 35.g3 ♘f6 36.fxe5 ♘xh5 37.♕h6 f5 38.♕h8+

1-0

Solution 14

Zaven Andriasyan 2579
Ilya Khmelniker 2483
Plovdiv tt 2010 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2 a6 7.0-0 d6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 9.♘c4

We mainly recommend 9.h3.

9...b5 10.♘e3 ♗e6 11.♗c2 h6 12.d4 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♗d7 14.♘df5 ♘e5 15.♔h1 ♖e8 16.f3 ♗c6 17.♗b3 ♕d7?! 18.♕d2!? ♖ad8?

19.♘xg7!

19.♘xh6+? ♔h8 20.♘hf5 d5± is not as good as the game.

19...♗xe3

19...♔xg7 20.♘f5+ ♔g8 21.♕xh6+–.

20.♘xe8

1-0

Solution 15

Juan Ramiro Ovejero 2377
Miguel Oviedo Rodriguez 2059
Lorca 2015 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.h3 0-0 7.♘bd2 ♖e8 8.0-0 ♗e6 9.♖e1 a6 10.♗b3 ♗xb3 11.axb3 d5 12.♕e2 dxe4 13.dxe4 ♕d7 14.♘f1 ♖ad8 15.♗g5 ♕e6 16.b4 ♗f8?

16...♗a7 was called for.

17.♘e3 ♘e7?!

18.♗xf6!

18.♕c4? is met by 18...♕xc4 19.♘xc4 ♘d7 20.♘a5 f6 21.♗e3 b6±.

18...gxf6?!

18...♕xf6 19.♘g4 ♕e6 20.♘gxe5 f6 21.♘d3 ♘c6 22.♘f4±.

19.♘h4! ♘g6 20.♘hf5 ♘f4 21.♕g4+ ♔h8 22.g3 ♘g6 23.♖ad1 ♗e7 24.h4 ♗f8 25.♘d5 ♖xd5 26.♖xd5 ♘e7 27.♖d3 ♘xf5 28.exf5 ♕c8 29.♖ed1 ♗d6 30.♕e4

And White is winning, but the game was drawn later.

Solution 16

Levente Vajda 2569
Ralph Müller 2392
Pardubice 2014 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 0-0 6.♘bd2 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♘e4 ♗b6 9.0-0 f6 10.a4 ♗e6 11.b4 a6 12.a5 ♗a7 13.♗e3 ♗xe3?! 14.fxe3 ♗f7 15.♕e1 ♕e7?! 16.♘c5 ♘d8?! 17.♘h4 g6?! 18.♕g3 ♔h8?!

19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♕xg6!! ♗xg2

20...hxg6 21.♘xg6+ ♔g7 22.♘xe7+–.

21.♕h6

1-0

Solution 17

Georgios Souleidis 2390
Hans-Hubert Sonntag 2391
Germany tt 2010/11 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 d6 6.♗b3

6.0-0 is our main recommendation in the book.

6...♗b6 7.♘bd2 ♘e7 8.♘f1 ♘g6 9.♘g3 0-0 10.0-0 h6 11.♖e1 c6 12.h3 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.d4 exd4 15.♘xd4 ♗e6?! 16.♗c2

The solid option. The computer even prefers 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♖xe6 ♖xf2 18.♔h1, but we think that this is unnecessarily risky.

16...♗xd4?!

16...♘df4 is critical, e.g. 17.♘xe6 ♕xd1 18.♖xd1 ♘xe6 (Brkic-Wagner, Bad Gleichenberg 2014) 19.a4N a6 20.a5 ♗c7 21.♘e4 ♖fd8 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.g3±.

17.♕xd4 ♘df4?!

18.♖e4!

18.♗xf4? ♕xd4 19.cxd4 ♘xf4∓.

18...♕xd4

18...♘d5 19.♖xe6! fxe6 20.♗xg6+– was the main point.

18...♘xg2 19.♔xg2 ♗d5 20.f3±.

19.cxd4 ♘xh3+

19...♘xg2 20.♔xg2 ♗d5 21.f3±.

20.gxh3 ♗xh3 21.♔h2 ♗d7 22.♗d2+–

and White went on to win.

Solution 18

Jorden van Foreest 2551
Daniel Ronneland 2169

Stockholm 2016 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 d6 5.d3 ♘f6 6.c3 0-0 7.h3 a6 8.♗b3 b5?!

A very rare move.

9.♖e1 h6 10.♘bd2 ♖e8 11.♘f1 d5?

11...a5 scores best for Black.

White reacts to Black's central advance with a typical counter-blow:

12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.d4! ♗f8

13...exd4? 14.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 15.♗xd5+–.

14.dxe5 ♗e6 15.♘g3 ♘b6 16.♕c2 ♘c4 17.♗f4 ♕e7 18.♕e4 ♕c5 19.♗c2 g6 20.b4 ♕b6 21.♘h5 ♗g7 22.♘xg7 ♔xg7 23.♗c1 ♘6xe5 24.♘xe5 ♗f5 25.♗xh6+ ♔xh6 26.♕f4+ ♔g7 27.♗xf5 ♘xe5 28.♖xe5 ♕f6 29.♖ae1 ♖xe5 30.♖xe5 ♖d8 31.♕g3 ♖d1+ 32.♔h2 ♖d2 33.f4 ♖xa2 34.♗g4 ♕c6 35.f5

1-0

Solution 19

Marie Sebag 2491
Albert Vermue
Vlissingen 2007 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 h6 6.♘bd2 0-0 7.0-0 d5?! 8.exd5 ♘xd5 9.♘e4 ♗b6?

9...♗e7 is forced.

10.♖e1?

10.♗xh6!! is already playable, and winning for White.

10...♗g4?

11.h3?

11.♗xh6!! ♘xc3 (11...gxh6 12.♗xd5 ♖e8 13.h3 ♗f5 14.♕d2 ♔g7 15.♘g3 ♗g6 16.♗e4 ♗xe4 17.♖xe4+–; 11...f6 12.♗d2+–) 12.bxc3 gxh6 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♘g3 ♗g6 15.♕d2 ♔h7 16.♗b5+–.

11...♗h5?

11...♗e6 is again called for.

12.♘g3?!

This is also better for White, but much stronger again is the typical tactic 12.♗xh6!! ♘xc3 (12…gxh6? 13.♗xd5+–) 13.bxc3 gxh6 14.♘g3 ♗g6 15.♕d2 ♔h7 16.♗b5±.

12...♗xf3?

12…♗g6 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♖xe5 c6 limits the damage.

13.♕xf3 ♘f6?! 14.♘f5 ♔h7 15.a4 ♕e8?

15…♘g8 is forced.

16.♘xh6! e4 17.♕f5+ ♔h8 18.d4 ♘e7 19.♕e5 ♘d7 20.♕xe4

1-0

Solution 20

Axel Bachmann 2633
Erik Santarius 2266
Arlington 2015 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♘bd2 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.♘f1

We castle first, but White can also postpone 0-0 of course; Tiviakov does this often for example.

8...d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘g3 0-0 11.0-0 ♘f6 12.h3

12.♗g5!?.

12...h6 13.♖e1 ♕d6?

13…♖e8 is called for.

14.♘h4! ♗b7?

14…♘e7 limits the damage.

15.♘gf5 ♕d7

16.♗xh6!

16.d4 exd4 17.♗xh6+– works as well.

16.♕f3? ♘d4 17.♕xb7 ♘xf5 18.♘g6 is also better for White, but not so clear.

16...gxh6 17.♕c1 ♘e7 18.♖xe5 ♘xf5 19.♖xf5 ♕d6 20.♕xh6 ♘h7 21.♕h5 ♗b6 22.♖xf7

Black resigned.

Solution 21

Sergey Berezjuk 2435
Jan Vinarcik
Bratislava 1993 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 h6 6.♘bd2 d6 7.h3 ♗b6 8.♗b3 a6 9.♘f1 ♕e7 10.♘g3 ♘d8?

Black's plan is too slow.

11.0-0 ♘e6 12.d4 ♘f8?! 13.♖e1 ♘g6?! 14.♗e3?!

14.♘f5! ♕f8 15.♗e3 is even better.

14...0-0 15.♕d2

Again 15.♘f5!? was called for.

15...♖e8

16.♗xh6!? gxh6 17.♕xh6 ♘h8?

The only defence was 17...d5! 18.♘xe5 ♕f8 19.♕g5 ♘h7 20.♘xg6 ♘xg5 21.♘xf8 ♖xf8 22.exd5 when White is better, but Black can still fight.

18.♘g5 ♕f8 19.♕xf6 ♕g7 20.♘h5 ♕f8 21.♗xf7+

1-0

Solution 22

Alexander Chudinovskikh 2417
Oliver Kniest 2274
Pardubice 2007 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♗b3 a6 7.♘bd2 ♗a7 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 h6 10.♘c4 ♗e6 11.♘e3 ♘e7 12.♘h4 d5 13.♕f3 dxe4 14.dxe4 ♗xb3 15.axb3 ♕d3?

15...♗xe3 16.♗xe3 ♕d6 17.b4 is only slightly better for White.

16.♘d5

1-0

Due to 16...♕xf3 17.♘xe7+ ♔h7 18.gxf3+–.
16.♘ef5 would have won as well.

Solution 23

Jean-Marc Degraeve 2523
Cyril Soyez 2254
La Fere 2008 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.0-0 ♗b6 9.♖e1 ♘f4?

9...f6 or 9...♗g4 are called for.

10.♘e4 ♗e6?

10...♘a5 limits the damage.

11.♗xf4 ♗xc4

11...exf4 12.♗xe6 fxe6 13.♘eg5+–.

12.dxc4 ♕xd1 13.♖axd1 exf4

14.c5!

14.b4? a6 is also better for White but of course not as good as the game.

14...f5

14...♗a5 15.♖b1 ♖fe8 16.b4+–.

15.♘eg5 ♗xc5 16.♘e6 ♗d6 17.♘xf8 ♖xf8 18.b4 g6 19.♖e2 a5 20.b5 ♘b8 21.b6

1-0

Solution 24

Jonathan Dourerassou 2436
Axel Bachmann 2623
Barcelona 2015 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♗b3 ♗a7 7.h3 d6 8.♘bd2 h6 9.♘f1 ♘e7 10.♘g3 ♘g6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖e1 ♖e8 13.d4 b5 14.a4 ♗b7 15.axb5?!

15.♕d3 is more precise.

15...axb5 16.♕d3 ♕d7?

16...exd4 17.♕xb5 ♗b6 18.♖xa8 ♕xa8 19.cxd4 ♗c6 20.♕f5 ♘e7 is called for.

17.♗e3?

17.♗xh6!! gxh6 (17...d5 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.dxe5 ♘xe5 20.♘xe5 ♖xe5 21.♖xa7 ♖xa7 22.♕d4+–) 18.♕e3 ♔h7 19.♖xa7 ♖xa7 20.dxe5 ♗xe4 21.♘xe4 ♘xe4 22.♕xa7+–.

17...exd4 18.♖xa7?

18.cxd4 was called for.

18...♖xa7 19.♗xd4

19...♖a6?

19...♘e5–+ refutes White's concept.

20.♗xf6 gxf6 21.♕d2 ♗xe4?

21...d5 22.♕xh6 ♕d6 was forced.

22.♘xe4 ♔g7 23.♘c5

1-0

Solution 25

Jana Jackova 2386

Martina Korenova 2232

Germany Bundesliga W 2005/06 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♘bd2 0-0 7.h3 a6 8.♗b3 d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘e4 ♗a7 11.0-0 ♗f5 12.♖e1 ♖e8?! 13.♘fg5 f6?

13...♗g6 is better, but White keeps pressure after 14.h4 ♘a5 15.h5 ♗xe4 16.dxe4 ♘xb3 17.♕xb3 ♕f6 18.♘f3 ♘b6 19.♗e3.

14.♕f3! ♘ce7 15.c4

15...♘b6?

15...fxg5 16.cxd5 ♔h8 17.♘xg5 ♖f8 18.♗e3±.

16.c5+ ♘bd5 17.♘d6 cxd6?!

17...c6 18.♘ge4+–.

18.♗xd5+ ♔f8 19.♕h5

1-0

19.♘xh7+!? ♗xh7 20.♕xf6+ gxf6 21.♗h6#.

Solution 26

Evgeny Janev 2493

Diana Soares

Lisbon 2001 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 ♗g4?! 7.h3 ♗h5?! 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♖e1 a6 10.a4 ♖e8 11.♘f1 d5 12.exd5 ♘xd5 13.♘g3 ♗g6 14.a5 ♕d6?

14...♘f4 is called for.

15.♘e4 ♗xe4 16.dxe4 ♘f6 17.♕b3 ♕d7 18.♘g5

18.♗g5!? was even better.

18...♖f8?

18...♘d8 was forced.

19.♘e6!

1-0

Solution 27

Ladislav Kotan 2369
Andrej Veres 2111
Tatry 2003 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 ♗b6 7.♗b3 h6 8.♘bd2 a6 9.♘c4 ♗a7 10.♗e3 ♗xe3 11.fxe3 ♗e6 12.d4 ♗xc4 13.♗xc4 ♕d7?! 14.♘h4 0-0?

14...0-0-0 was called for.

15.♖xf6!

15.♘f5? ♔h7 16.♕f3 ♘e8 is also better for White, but not as good as the game continuation.

15...gxf6

15...♕e7 16.♖xf7 ♖xf7 17.♕g4 also loses.

16.♘f5

1-0

Solution 28

Nikoletta Lakos 2335
Günter Kuba 2238
Oberwart 1999 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.♖e1 0-0 8.♗b3 ♖e8 9.♘bd2 ♘h5?! 10.d4 exd4 11.cxd4 ♗a7 12.♘f1 ♕f6?

12...♗g4 is called for.

13.♗e3?

13.♘g5+–.

13...♖xe4?

13...♗g4 was again called for.

14.♗c2?

14.♘g5 ♖e7 15.♕xh5+–.

14...♖e8 15.d5 ♘e5?

15...♖xe3 16.♘xe3 ♘e7 limits the damage.

16.♗xa7?

16.♘xe5! ♖xe5 17.♗xa7 ♖xa7 18.♕xh5+– is the right order of moves.

16...♖xa7?

16...♗g4! throws a spanner in the works, e.g. 17.♖xe5 dxe5 18.♗e3 e4 19.♕d4 ♗xf3 20.♕xf6 ♘xf6 21.gxf3 ♘xd5 and Black can still fight.

17.♘xe5 ♖xe5 18.♕xh5

Black resigned.

Solution 29

Salome Melia 2409

Turkan Mamedyarova 2557

Mamaia Ech W 2016 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 a6 8.♗b3 ♗a7 9.h3 ♘e7 10.♖e1 ♘g6 11.♘f1 ♘h5 12.d4 exd4 13.cxd4 ♘hf4 14.♘g3 ♗e6 15.♗c2 ♖e8 16.♗e3 ♕f6?

16...d5 was called for.

17.♘h5!! ♘xh5 18.♗g5 ♗xd4 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♘d4 ♗xd4 21.♕xd4 ♘hf4 22.♕e3 ♗d7 23.h4 d5 24.♕f3 h5 25.exd5 ♗g4 26.♕b3 ♘xh4

27.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 28.♕a4 ♘e2+ 29.♔h2 ♖e5 30.f3

1-0

Solution 30

Vladislav Nevednichy 2593
Anthony Kosten 2514
Montpellier 2003 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 a6 6.♗b3 ♗a7 7.h3 d6 8.♘bd2 h6 9.♘f1 ♗e6 10.♘g3 0-0 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♖e1 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♗d2 ♕f6?

14...♕d6 is the main line.

15.♘e4?

15.d4!N exd4 16.♘h5 ♕g6 (16...♕d8 17.♗xh6 gxh6 18.♗xd5+–) 17.♘h4 ♕h7 18.♖xe6 fxe6 19.♕g4 ♘e5 20.♕g3+–.

15...♕e7 16.♕e2 ♖ad8 17.♗c2 f6 18.♘g3 ♕f7=

And the game was drawn later.

Solution 31

Uffe Nielsen 2380
Daniel Pedersen 2250
ch-DEN 1996 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♗b3 ♗e6 8.♖e1 ♘g4?! 9.♖e2 d5?! 10.♘bd2 ♖e8 11.h3 ♘f6 12.♘g5 ♗c8?

Black does not have time for this. 12...♕d7 is called for.

13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♘de4 ♗e7 15.♖e1 ♗xg5 16.♘xg5?!

16.♗xg5 ♘de7 17.♕h5 ♗e6 18.♖e3+– is even better.

16...h6?

17.♘xf7!

17.♕f3? hxg5 18.♗xd5 ♗e6 is better for White, but not so convincing.

17...♔xf7 18.♕f3+ ♔e6 19.d4

1-0

For example 19...♖f8 20.♕e4 ♘ce7 21.♕h7 ♖f7 22.♗xh6 gxh6 23.♖xe5+ ♔f6 24.♕xh6+ ♘g6 25.♕g5+, winning easily.

Solution 32

Dmitry Panchenko 2419
Kristina Cherenkova 2254
Riazan 2007

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♗b3 d6 7.c3 a6 8.♘bd2 ♗a7 9.h3 h6 10.♖e1 ♗e6 11.♗c2 ♖e8 12.♘f1 d5 13.♕e2 ♕d7 14.♘g3 b5 15.♘h2 ♘e7 16.♕f3 ♘h7 17.♘g4 ♘g5?

17...♘g6 was called for.

18.♘xh6+! gxh6 19.♗xg5 ♗xh3

19...hxg5 20.♕f6 ♘g6 21.exd5 ♕xd5 22.♘h5 ♔f8 23.d4 ♕d8 24.♕g7+ ♔e7 25.♗xg6+–.

20.♘h5 ♕e6 21.♗xe7

1-0

Solution 33

Gyula Sax 2520
Branko Rogulj 2411
Slovenia tt 2003 (9)

1.e4 ♘c6 2.♘f3 e5 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♗b3 0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.h3 h6 9.♖e1 ♘h7 10.d4 ♗a7 11.♗e3 ♕f6 12.♘a3 ♖e8 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♖xe5?

14...dxe5 was called for.

15.♗xa7 ♖xa7 16.♘c4 ♖e8

17.e5! dxe5 18.♘xe5 ♗e6?

18...♖xe5 19.♖xe5 ♕xe5 20.♕d8+ ♘f8 21.♕xc8 c5 22.♖d1±.

19.♘xf7! ♕xf7 20.♖xe6 ♖xe6 21.♕d8+ ♘f8 22.♕b8

1-0

Solution 34

Georgios Souleidis 2405
Robert Stein 2035
St. Pauli 2015 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♗b3 0-0 7.0-0 h6 8.h3 ♖e8 9.♖e1 ♗b6 10.♘bd2 ♗e6 11.♘c4 ♗xc4?! 12.♗xc4 ♘h5?

The knight is unprotected, which White can exploit with a simple tactic. 12...♕d7 limits the damage.

13.♘g5! hxg5 14.♕xh5 ♕f6 15.♗xg5 ♗xf2+

15...♕xf2+ 16.♔h2 ♘e7 17.♖f1+–.

16.♔f1

And Black resigned.

Solution 35

Georgios Souleidis
Hans-Jürgen Schulz
Hamburg 2004 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 h6 5.0-0 ♗c5 6.c3 d5? 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.b4

8.♕b3 is even better, giving White a won position.

8...♗b6?

8...♗e7 limits the damage.

9.♗xd5! ♕xd5 10.c4 ♕d6 11.c5 ♗xc5 12.bxc5 ♕xc5 13.♗a3 ♕d5 14.♘c3 ♕a5 15.♕b3 ♗d7 16.d4 exd4 17.♖fe1+ ♔d8 18.♕xb7 ♖c8 19.♘xd4 ♕xc3 20.♘xc6+ ♕xc6 21.♕xc6 ♗xc6 22.♖ad1+ ♗d7 23.♖e7

1-0

Solution 36

Dimitar Pelitov 2320

Mitko Garkov 2365

Primorsko 1987 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 0-0 7.♗b3 a6 8.♗e3 ♗xe3 9.fxe3 d5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♕e1 ♖e8 12.♘bd2 ♗e6 13.♘e4 h6 14.♘h4 ♘b6?

14...♘a5 is called for.

15.♕g3 ♖e7 16.♘f6+ ♔h8

17.♕g6! ♕g8

17...fxg6? 18.♘xg6# is the beautiful point.

17...gxf6 18.♕xh6+ ♔g8 19.♖f3+–.

18.♘xg8 fxg6 19.♘xe7

Black resigned.

Solution 37

Miroslav Voracek

Adolf Vegjeleki 2313

WS TT Latvian Gambit email 2007

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 f5

2...♘c6 3.♗c4 f5?! 4.d4 is our move order.

3.♗c4 ♘c6 4.d4

For further details see Chapter 1.

4...exd4 5.e5 d5 6.exd6 ♕xd6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♖e1 ♗d7 9.♘g5 ♘h6 10.♘e6 ♗xe6 11.♖xe6 ♕c5 12.b3 0-0-0 13.♗a3 ♘b4

14.♕e1! ♘xc2 15.♗xc5 ♘xe1 16.♖xe7 ♘c2 17.♘a3 ♘xa1 18.♘b5! b6

18...d3? 19.♗xa7!+–.

18...♖he8 19.♗e6+ ♔b8 20.♗xa7+ ♔a8 21.♖xe8 ♖xe8 22.♘xc7+ ♔xa7 23.♘xe8 d3 24.♔f1 g6 25.♗c4±.

19.♗b4 d3 20.♗d2 g5?!

20...♖he8 21.♖xc7+ ♔b8 22.♖xg7 ♘g4 23.♘c7 ♖e2 24.♘a6+ ♔a8 25.♖g8! ♔b7 26.♖xd8 ♖xd2 27.♖d7+ ♔c8 28.♖xd3±.

21.♘xc7 ♘g8 22.♖f7 ♘h6 23.♖g7 ♖hg8 24.♖xh7 ♖h8 25.♖g7 ♖hg8 26.♖e7 ♔b8 27.h4 f4 28.♗xg8 ♘xg8 29.♘a6+ ♔a8 30.♖g7 ♘c2 31.hxg5 ♘d4 32.♔f1 ♘f5 33.♘c7+ ♔b7 34.♖h7 ♘fe7 35.♘e6

And Black resigned.

Solution 38

Alexander Dyakov 2250
Marcelo Ibar 2309
IECG QM email 2002

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 d5?!

For further analysis of this line, see Chapter 3.

5.exd5 ♘xd5 6.0-0 ♗c5 7.♖e1 0-0 8.♘xe5 ♕h4

Black has sacrificed a pawn for the attack, but this is premature. White can parry the threat and gain a clear advantage, as follows:

9.♘f3

9.♕f3?! is not that clear, e.g. 9...♘f6 (9...♘b6! 10.♘xc6 ♗g4 11.♕f4 bxc6 12.h3 ♘xc4 13.dxc4 f5! 14.♗e3 ♗d6 15.♕g5 ♕xg5 16.♗xg5 ♗h5±) 10.♘xc6 ♘g4 11.d4! ♕xh2+ 12.♔f1 ♗d6 13.♘e5 ♗xe5 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♖xe5 ♕xe5 16.♘c3± Shanava-Lyell, Dresden 2007.

9...♕xf2+ 10.♔h1 ♘f6 11.♖e2 ♘g4 12.c3

A very calm move.

12...b5

12...♘a5 13.h3 ♕g3 14.hxg4 ♘xc4 15.dxc4 ♗xg4 16.♕e1!±.

13.♗d5 ♗b7 14.♘bd2

Black loses material.

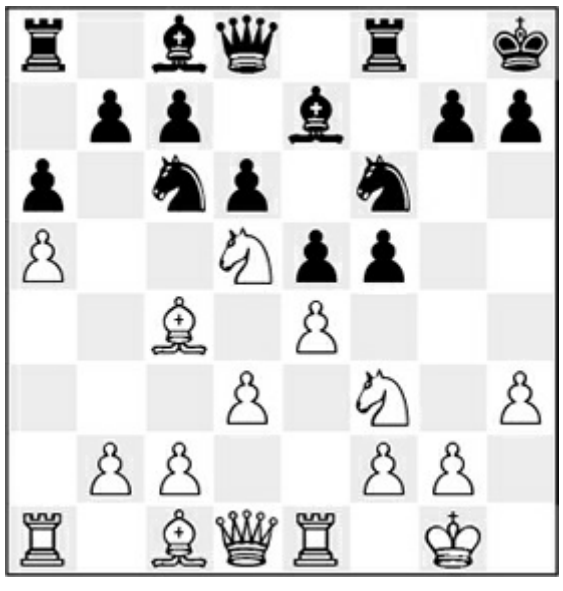
14...♖ae8 15.♘e4 ♕xe2 16.♕xe2 ♘f2+ 17.♕xf2 ♗xf2 18.♘xf2 ♘a5 19.♗xb7 ♘xb7 20.a4 ♘c5 21.axb5 ♖e2 22.♔g1 ♘b3 23.♖b1 ♘xc1 24.♖xc1 ♖xb2 25.c4 a6 26.bxa6 ♖a2 27.♖b1 ♖xa6 28.♘e4 ♖fa8 29.♔f2 ♖a2+ 30.♔g3 f5 31.♘c3 ♖2a3 32.♘d5 ♖xd3 33.♖b7 g5 34.h3 h5 35.♔h2

1-0

Solution 39

Dejan Bojkov 2521
Julian Radulski 2539
Greece tt 2009 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 ♔h8 8.h3 ♘g8 9.a5 a6 10.♘c3 f5 11.♘d5 ♘f6



12.♘g5! ♘g8

The justification is 12...♘xd5? 13.♘xh7! ♘f6 (13...♔xh7?? 14.♕h5+ ♔g8 15.♗xd5++–)

14.♘xf6 g6 15.♘d5±.

12...fxe4 13.♘xf6 ♖xf6 14.♘f7+ ♖xf7 15.♗xf7 exd3 16.♕xd3±.

13.♕h5 ♘h6 14.c3 f4 15.♘xe7 ♕xe7 16.b4

This is not bad. But instead we suggest the new move 16.g3! For further details see Chapter 3 (main line 7...♔h8).

16...♗d7 17.♗b2

17.d4!?.

17...♖f6 18.d4?

18.♔f1 is maybe holding.

18...♖g6 19.♘f3 ♘g4!

Now Black has the upper hand.

20.♘h4

20.hxg4 ♗xg4 21.♕h4 ♗xf3–+.

20...♖g5

The computer suggestion 20...♖h6 21.♘f5 ♗xf5 22.♕xf5 ♘xf2 23.♔xf2 ♖f8 24.♕g4 ♖g6 25.♕h5 exd4 26.cxd4 f3 27.g3 d5!∓ with the idea 28...♕xb4 is a sequence which is difficult to spot for a human.

21.♕f7 ♕xf7 22.♗xf7 ♘h6 23.♗d5 ♗xh3 24.♔f1 ♗d7 25.♘f3 ♖h5 26.dxe5 dxe5 27.♖ed1 ♘g4 28.♗f7 ♖h1+ 29.♔e2 ♖xd1 30.♖xd1 ♘f6 31.c4?

31.♘g5=.

31...♗g4 32.♗d5 ♘xb4∓ 33.♗xe5 ♘bxd5

33...c6∓.

34.cxd5 ♘xe4 35.♖d4 ♘d6 36.♗xd6 cxd6 37.♖xf4 ♖e8+ 38.♔d3 ♗xf3 39.♖xf3 ♔g8

The rook ending doesn't seem holdable for White and soon he is lost.

40.♔d4 ♖f8 41.♖b3 ♖xf2 42.♖xb7 ♖xg2 43.♖b6 h5 44.♖xa6 h4 45.♖b6 h3 46.♖b1 ♖a2 47.♔e4 ♖xa5 48.♔f5 ♖xd5+ 49.♔g6 ♔f8 50.♖b8+ ♔e7 51.♖b7+ ♔e6 52.♖xg7 ♖d3

0-1

Solution 40

Tomasz Rakowiecki 2315
Miroslaw Gawronski 2205
Lodz 1997

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♗c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.0-0 0-0 6.c3 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♖e1

For further analysis of this variation see Chapter 4.1.

8...♘b6 9.♗g5 ♕d7?! 10.♗b3 ♖e8 11.a4 a5 12.♗h4 ♗d6 13.♘bd2 h6 14.♘e4 ♗f8 15.h3 ♘d5? 16.d4 exd4

17.♘xd4?

Which is also better and won later anyway. But 17.♗xd5!N decides the day more or less immediately: 17...♕xd5 18.♘f6+ gxf6 19.♖xe8 ♕d7 20.♖xf8+!. Other moves win too, but this is the best. 20...♔xf8 21.♕d2 ♔g7 22.♗xf6+! ♔xf6 23.♕xh6+ ♔e7 24.♖e1+, with an easy win.

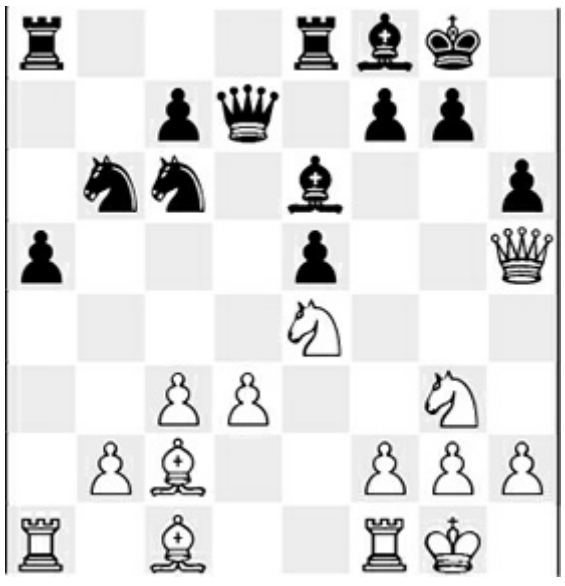
Solution 41

Kacper Piorun 2591
Jonas Lampert 2469
Germany Bundesliga 2015-16 (15)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 0-0 6.0-0 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.a4 a6 9.a5

9.♘bd2 is our recommendation, covered in Chapter 4.2.

9...b5 10.axb6 ♘xb6 11.♗b3 ♗f5 12.♗c2 ♕d7 13.♕e2 ♖fe8 14.♘bd2 a5 15.♘e4 ♗f8 16.♘g3 ♗e6 17.♘g5 ♗d5 18.♕h5 h6 19.♘5e4 ♗e6



20.♗xh6!

20.♘f6+ gxf6 21.♗xh6 ♗g4 22.♕h4 ♗xh6 23.♕xh6 ♖e6 24.f3 f5 25.♕h4 ♕e7 26.♕xe7 ♘xe7 27.fxg4± is also better for White.

20...f5 21.♗xg7!

The point.

21...fxe4?

A) 21...♗xg7 is relatively best. White has the upper hand after 22.♘g5 ♘d5 23.♗b3 ♖ab8 (23...♘f6 24.♘xe6 ♘xh5 25.♘c5+ ♕f7 26.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 27.♘xh5±) 24.♕h7+ ♔f8 25.♗xd5 ♗xd5 26.♘xf5 ♗g8 27.♕g6 ♖b6 28.f4! ♘d4 29.♕xg7+ ♕xg7 30.♘xg7 ♘e2+ 31.♔f2 ♔xg7 32.♔xe2±;

B) 21...♕xg7? 22.♘xf5 ♗xf5 (22...♕f7 23.♕g5+ ♔h8 24.♘f6 ♗xf5 25.♕xf5+–)

23.♕xf5 ♘e7 24.♘f6+ ♔h8 25.♕h5+ ♕h6 26.♕xh6+ ♗xh6 27.♘xe8+–.

22.♕h8+ ♔f7

23.♗d1

This leads to a technically won endgame, but there were far better and nicer ways to end the game. 23.♗f6!! wins. The idea is 24.♕h7+ ♔xf6 25.♘xe4.

Black has no good defence, for example: 23…♖e7 24.d4! ♔e8 25.♗xe4 ♗d5 26.♗g6+ ♗f7 27.♗xe7 ♘xe7 28.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 29.f4 exd4 30.f5 ♘ed5 31.f6+–.

23.♘h5 exd3 24.♗xe5!+– is another elegant way to finish the game.

23…♗xg7 24.♗h5+ ♔e7 25.♕xg7+ ♔d8 26.♕xd7+ ♘xd7 27.♗xe8 ♔xe8 28.♘xe4

With a rook and three pawns against two pieces White is winning.

28…♖b8 29.b4?!

There was no reason to give up the b-pawn.

29.♖fb1+–.

29…axb4 30.cxb4 ♘xb4 31.♖fb1 ♖b6 32.h4?!

White is playing with fire.

32.♖a3±.

32…♘xd3 33.♖xb6 cxb6 34.h5 ♔f7?

34…♔e7! is the correct square for the king. White is only slightly better after 35.f3 (35.h6?! ♗f5! and all three results are possible) 35…♗d5 36.♘c3 ♗b7 37.♖a4±.

35.h6!

Black has to give up material for the pawn now.

35…♘f8

35…♗d5 36.♘g5+ ♔g8 37.♖a7 ♘3c5 38.♖c7 ♘f8 39.♖c8 ♘cd7 40.f3+–. The black forces are paralysed.

36.♘g5+ ♔f6

36...♔e7 37.h7 ♘xh7 38.♖a7+ ♔d6 39.♘xe6+–.

37.h7 ♔g7 38.♖a8

38.♖a7+! ♗d7 39.♘e6+ ♘xe6 40.♖xd7+ ♔h8 41.♖xd3+–.

38...♘xh7 39.♖a7+ ♔g6 40.♘xe6+– ♘f6 41.♖b7 ♘d5 42.♘f8+ ♔f5 43.♘d7 ♘c3 44.♘xb6 ♘d1 45.♘c4 ♔e6 46.f3 ♘c3 47.♔h2 ♘d5 48.♘d2 ♘5f4 49.g3 ♘d5 50.♖b3 ♘c5 51.♖a3 ♘f6 52.♖a5 ♘d3 53.♖a6+ ♔f5 54.g4+ ♔g5 55.♔g3 ♘f4 56.♘c4

1-0

Solution 42

Mikhail Antipov 2567
Samuel Sevian 2578
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (10)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.c3 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.a4

For further details see Chapter 4.2.

8...a6 9.♘bd2 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.♖e1 ♘b6 13.♗b3 ♗g6 14.a5 ♘d5 15.♗a4 f6 16.♘h4 ♘xa5 17.♘xg6 hxg6 18.b4 b5 19.♗c2 ♘b7

20.♗b3?

White missed the beautiful shot 20.♕g4!! and eventually lost the game after a mistake. 20...f5 (20...♔h7 21.♕h4+ ♔g8 22.♗b3 c6 23.c4 bxc4 24.dxc4 ♘xb4 25.♖d1 ♕e8 26.c5+ ♘d5 27.♖xd5! cxd5 28.♗xd5+ ♖f7 29.♗xb7 f5 30.♕g3 (30.♗g5+–) 30...fxe4 31.♕xg6 ♖f6 32.♕xe4+–) 21.♕xg6 fxe4 (21...♕e8 22.♕g3 c6 23.♘g5±) 22.♕xe4 c6 23.d4 ♘f6 24.♕xc6 ♕d7 25.♕xd7 ♘xd7 26.dxe5±. White has a strong pawn armada on the kingside in exchange for the knight and a strong bishop pair.

20...c6 21.♕g4 ♕e8

And now White played

22.c4?=

and even lost later. After 22.♗d2 he is still for choice.

Solution 43

Kamil Dragun 2595
Tamas Banusz 2621
Katowice tt 2016 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2 a6 7.c3 d5 8.exd5 ♘xd5 9.♖e1

For further details see Chapter 4.3.

9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗h5 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.♘g3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 ♘b6 14.♗b3 ♗g5 15.♘e4 ♗xc1 16.♖axc1 ♕e7 17.♕h5 h6 18.♖e3 ♖ad8 19.♖f3 ♘a5 20.♘f6+ ♔h8 21.♘g4 f6 22.♗c2 ♕e8 23.♕h4 h5?!

24.♘xf6! gxf6

24...♖xf6 25.♖xf6 gxf6 26.♕xf6+ ♔g8 27.♕g5+ ♔f8 28.♖e1+–.

25.♖xf6

25.♖f5! is even better and winning after e.g. 25...♔g7 26.d4!+–, but White won anyway in a convincing manner.

25...♖d6 26.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 27.♕xh5+ ♔g8 28.♖e1

28.♕xe5+–.

28...♘c6

28...♕f7 29.♕xe5+–.

29.♗b3+ ♔g7 30.♖e3 ♖g6 31.♖f3 ♕e7 32.♖f7+

32.♗g8!+–.

32...♕xf7 33.♗xf7 ♔xf7 34.♕f5+ ♔g7 35.h4 ♖f6 36.♕h3 ♖d6 37.h5 ♘d5 38.♕c8 b5 39.♕xa6 b4 40.♕c8 bxc3 41.bxc3 ♘ce7 42.♕g4+ ♔f7 43.♕e4 ♘f6 44.♕xe5 ♖xd3 45.♕xc7 ♘fd5 46.♕e5 ♖xc3 47.g4 ♖f3 48.h6 ♘f6 49.g5 ♖f5 50.g6+ ♔xg6 51.♕xe7 ♔xh6 52.a4 ♘h7 53.♕d6+

1-0

Solution 44

Richard Rapport 2701

Dragisa Blagojevic 2505

Paracin 2014 (9)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.♘bd2

For further details regarding this move order see Chapter 4.4.

6...d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♘e4 ♗e7 9.0-0 ♘b6 10.♗b3 ♗f5 11.a4 a5 12.♗e3 ♘d5 13.♗c4 ♘xe3 14.fxe3 ♗xe4 15.dxe4 ♗c5 16.♕e2 ♕e7 17.h4 ♘d8 18.♖ad1 ♗d6 19.♘g5 h6

20.♕g4! hxg5 21.hxg5 ♗c5 22.♖f3!+–

Bringing new forces into the attack. Black is lost, no matter what he does.

22...♘e6

22...♗xe3+ 23.♖xe3 ♕c5 24.♖dd3! ♕xc4 25.♕h5+– with the idea 26.♖h3.

23.g6 ♖a6

23...♖ae8 24.♖df1+–.

24.b4!?

24.♖df1 ♘f4 25.gxf7+ ♖xf7 26.g3 ♖g6 27.♕xg6! ♘xg6 28.♖xf7+–.

24...axb4 25.cxb4 ♗a7

25...♘g5 26.gxf7+ ♔h8 27.♗xa6 ♘xf3+ 28.♕xf3+–.

26.b5 ♗xe3+ 27.♖xe3 ♕c5 28.♕h3

1-0

Solution 45

Tomasz Slawinski 2384

Wladyslaw Krol 2395

POL-ch email 2009

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♘bd2 a6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.0-0 ♘g4 9.h3 h5 10.♘c4 ♕f6 11.d4 exd4 12.cxd4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗e3 ♗e5 15.♕d2 ♗h2+ 16.♔h1 ♕e7 17.♗g5 f6

18.e5!!

What a great move! White wants to open the e-file.

18...♗xe5

A) 18...dxe5 19.f3! and Black is lost, e.g. 19...fxg5 20.fxg4 ♗f4 (20...hxg4 21.♔xh2 gxh3 22.g3+–) 21.♖xf4! gxf4 22.♘xe5! ♖h6 23.♖e1 ♖d6 24.♕xf4+–;

B) 18...♘xe5 19.f4! fxg5 20.fxe5+–;

C) 18...fxg5 19.exd6 ♗f4 20.♖ae1! ♗xd2 21.♖xe7+ ♔d8 22.♘xd2 cxd6 23.♖xg7+–.

19.f4! ♗e6 20.fxe5 ♘xe5 21.♗a4+! ♘d7

21...b5 22.♘xe5 dxe5 23.♗c2 ♖d8 24.♕f2 fxg5 25.♗g6+ ♔d7 26.♖fd1+ ♔c8 27.♕a7+–.

22.♗f4 0-0

22...♗xc4 23.♖fe1 ♗e6 24.♖xe6 ♕xe6 25.♖e1+–.

23.♘e3+–

The piece is worth far more than three pawns because the black kingside is particularly weak. White won without problems:

23...♕f7 24.♗d1 ♘e5 25.♗c2 ♘g6 26.♖ad1 ♖fe8 27.♕d3 ♘f8 28.♘f5 ♔h8 29.♖f3 a5 30.♖g3 ♗xf5 31.♕xf5 a4 32.♗d2 ♖e5 33.♕f3 ♕d5 34.♕f2 ♕f7 35.♗c3 ♖c5 36.♕f3 d5 37.♖g5 c6 38.♖f1 ♖xc3 39.bxc3 ♔g8 40.♖xh5 ♖e8 41.♕g4 f5 42.♖hxf5

1-0

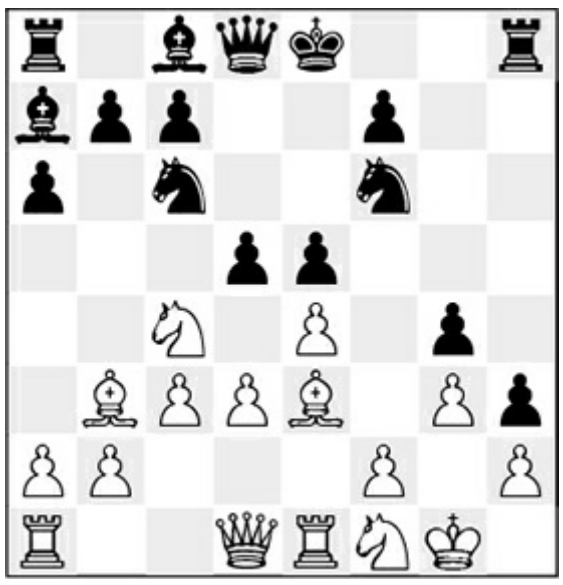
Solution 46

Rout Padmini 2427
Anna Muzychuk 2537
Gibraltar 2016 (9)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 a6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♖e1 h6 9.♘bd2 g5

Regarding this premature attack see Chapter 5.1.2.

10.♘f1 g4 11.♘3d2 h5 12.♘c4 h4 13.♗e3 h3 14.g3 d5



15.♘cd2?

15.exd5! ♕xd5 16.f3! gxf3 17.♕d2! ♘g4 (17...f2+ 18.♕xf2 ♕g2+ 19.♕xg2 hxg2 20.♘fd2 ♗xe3+ 21.♘xe3 ♗h3 22.♘f3±) 18.♘xe5!!.

analysis diagram

This amazing move is difficult to find in advance. 18...f2+ (18...♗xe3+ 19.♖xe3! ♕xe5 20.d4!+–; 18...♘xe3 19.♗xd5 ♘c4+ 20.d4 ♘xd2 21.♘xc6++–) 19.♕xf2! ♘xf2 (19...♕g2+ 20.♕xg2 hxg2 21.♘xg4 gxf1♕+ 22.♔xf1 ♗xg4 23.♗xa7+ ♔d7 24.♗g1+–) 20.♗xd5 ♘xe5 21.♗xf2 ♗xf2+ 22.♔xf2 ♖h5 23.d4 ♗e6 24.♗xb7 ♖b8 25.♖xe5 ♖xe5 26.♗c6+ ♔e7 27.dxe5, with a won position.

15...d4

Black is slightly better and went on to win:

16.♗g5 ♖h5 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.c4 ♗d7 19.♗a4 ♗c5 20.a3 ♗f8 21.b4 ♖g5 22.♖a2 ♜g6 23.c5 b5 24.♗c2 a5 25.♖b2 axb4 26.axb4 ♗h6 27.♕b1 ♔e7 28.♗d1 ♜gg8 29.♖a2 ♜xa2 30.♕xa2 ♘xb4 31.♕a3 ♘c6 32.♗e2 ♜b8 33.♖b1 ♔e8 34.♕a6 ♗c8 35.♕a3 ♕e7 36.♘b3 ♗e6 37.♘fd2 ♕d8 38.♖a1 ♕c8 39.♔f1 ♜b7 40.♕a6 ♘b4 41.♕a5 ♘c6 42.♕a3 ♜a7 43.♕b2 ♕a8 44.♖xa7 ♕xa7 45.♕c2 ♗xd2 46.♘xd2 ♕a1+ 47.♕d1 ♕xd1+ 48.♗xd1 ♘b4 49.♔e2 ♔d7 50.♗b3 ♗xb3 51.♘xb3 ♔c6 52.♘a5+ ♔xc5 53.♘b7+ ♔b6 54.♘d8 f6 55.♘f7 c5 56.♘h6 c4 57.dxc4 bxc4 58.♘xg4 c3 59.♘xf6 d3+ 60.♔e3 c2 61.♔d2 ♘a2

0-1

Solution 47

Miragha Aghayev 2357
Jacek Stopa 2498
Bratto 2014 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♗b3 h6 8.♖e1 a6 9.♘bd2 ♗e6 10.♗c2?

10...♘g4!

Starts a forced sequence.

11.♖e2

11.♖f1 is the same.

11...♗xf2+! 12.♖xf2 ♘e3 13.♕e2 ♘xc2 14.♖b1 ♗xa2 15.b3 ♗xb1 16.♘xb1 ♘a1 17.♕a2 ♘xb3 18.♕xb3 b5∓

A rook and three pawns are worth more than two white pieces. Black is better and went on to win:

19.♘a3 ♕e7 20.♘c2 ♕e6 21.♕b1 f5 22.♘e3 ♘e7 23.♖a2 a5 24.♖e2 c6 25.d4 f4 26.♘c2 ♕c4 27.♖e1 ♘g6 28.♘a3 ♕xc3 29.♕a2+ ♔h7 30.♗b2 ♕d3 31.♕e6 b4 32.♕h3 ♕a6 33.♘c2 ♕c4 34.♖c1 ♕a2 35.♘g5+ ♔h8 36.♗a1 b3 37.♕e6 b2

0-1

Solution 48

Hou Yifan 2629

Antoaneta Stefanova 2486

Beijing Basque W 2013 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.h3 d6 7.c3 ♗b6 8.♗b3 h6 9.♘bd2 ♘e7

We take an extensive look at this line in Chapter 6.2.

10.♖e1 c6 11.d4 ♘g6 12.♘f1 ♗e6 13.♗c2 ♖e8 14.♘g3 ♕d7 15.♗e3 ♖ad8 16.a4 ♗c7 17.a5 a6 18.♕c1 d5

19.♗xh6!

A typical blow, which you should always look out for in similar situations.

19...exd4?

This was a rapid game, so it's natural to not always find the best moves. 19...gxh6 20.♕xh6 ♕e7 21.dxe5 ♘h7 22.♘f5 ♕f8 23.♕h5 ♘f4 24.♕g4+ ♘g6 25.♘3h4 and the attack continues.

20.e5! ♘e4 21.♘h5

Nice was 21.♗xg7! ♔xg7 22.♘h5+ ♔f8 23.cxd4 and Black is lost, e.g. 23...♗f5 24.♗xe4 dxe4 25.♕h6+ ♔e7 26.♕g5+ ♔f8 27.♘f6 ♕e6 28.g4 ♗xg4 29.♕h6+ ♔e7 30.♘g5+–, but White won anyway in a convincing manner.

21...♗xh3 22.♗xe4 ♕g4 23.♘g3 ♘xe5 24.♘xe5 ♖xe5 25.gxh3 ♕xh3 26.♗f4 dxe4 27.cxd4 ♖xd4 28.♗xe5 ♗xe5 29.♖a3 ♗d6 30.♖b3 ♕g4 31.♕e3 c5 32.♕e2 ♕h4 33.♖d1 f5 34.♖xd4 cxd4 35.♕c4+ ♔h7 36.♕xd4

1-0

Solution 49

Evgeny Vorobiov 2542

Robert Cvek 2430

Pardubice 2002 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♘bd2 ♗a7 7.♗b3 d6 8.h3 ♘e7 9.♘f1

The game transposes to a line we analyse in Chapter 6.3.

9...♘g6 10.♘g3 0-0 11.0-0 ♗e6 12.d4 ♖e8 13.♖e1 h6 14.♗e3 ♕c8 15.♗c2 ♗d7 16.♕d2 ♔h7 17.♖ad1 ♗c6 18.c4 exd4

19.♗xh6!!+–

White ignores the pawn on d4 and starts a ferocious attack.

19...gxh6 20.♘f5 ♘g8 21.♘g5+ ♔h8

21...hxg5 22.♕xg5+– and Black has to give up the queen to avoid mate.

22.♘xf7+ ♔h7 23.e5

This wins, as does the following continuation: 23.♘7xh6! ♖e6 24.e5! dxe5 25.♘f7 ♕d7 26.♘g5+ ♔h8 27.♘xe6 ♕xe6 28.♕g5 ♕f7 29.♘h4 ♘f8 30.c5+–.

23...dxe5 24.♘g5+ ♔h8 25.♘f7+ ♔h7 26.♘xe5 ♖xe5 27.♖xe5 ♘xe5 28.♘e7+ ♔g7 29.♘xc8 ♖xc8 30.♕f4 ♖e8 31.b4 ♘xc4 32.♕g3+ ♔f8 33.♗b3 ♗d5 34.♕xc7 ♗b6 35.♕f4+ ♔g7 36.♖xd4 ♗xd4 37.♕xd4+ ♘f6 38.f3 b5 39.♕a7+ ♔g6 40.♗c2+ ♔h5 41.♕g7 ♖e6 42.♕g6+ ♔h4 43.g3+

1-0

Solutions to strategic exercises

Solution 50

Dibyendu Barua 2491
D.P. Singh 2326
Kolkata 2008 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♗c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 a6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♗e3 0-0 9.♘bd2 ♗e6 10.♗c2 d5 11.♗g5 ♕d6?

11...h6 is better.

12.♗xf6! gxf6 13.♘h4

A typical manoeuvre to exploit the weakened light squares.

13...♔h8

13...♘e7 14.exd5 ♗xd5 15.♘c4 ♕c6 (15...♗xc4 16.♕g4+ ♔h8 17.dxc4±) 16.♘e3 ♔h8 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.♕f3±.

14.♕f3 ♕d8 15.exd5 f5

15...♗xd5 16.♘e4±.

16.♘xf5

16.dxc6!?.

16...♕g5?

16...♗xd5 17.♘e4 ♘e7 18.♗b3 ♗xb3 19.axb3 ♘xf5 20.♕xf5 f6± limits the damage.

17.♘e3 ♗d7 18.dxc6 ♗xc6 19.♘e4 ♕g6 20.♘f5 ♖ae8 21.♗b3 a5 22.a4

1-0

Solution 51

Christian Bauer 2614
Cyril Marzolo 2474
Nancy 2008 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗c5 5.c3 a6 6.♗b3 ♗a7 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.h3 d6 9.♘f1 ♘e7 10.♘g3 ♘g6 11.0-0 ♗e6 12.d4 ♗xb3 13.♕xb3 b5 14.a4 ♗b6 15.♖e1 ♖b8 16.♗e3 h6?

16...c5 was called for.

17.a5! ♗a7?

17…exd4 was forced, e.g. 18.cxd4 ♗a7 19.e5 ♘h7 20.♖ac1±, due to Black's weaknesses on the queenside.

18.dxe5 ♗xe3 19.exf6

1-0

Due to 19…♗a7 20.fxg7 ♖e8 21.♘f5+–.

Solution 52

Alexis Cabrera Pino 2440
Daniel Campora Perez 2132
Seville 2002 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘bd2 h6 8.♖e1 ♗d7?! 9.♗b3 ♗b6 10.♘c4 ♖e8 11.♗c2 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5 13.♘xb6 axb6 14.g4 ♗g6 15.♘h4 ♗h7?!

16.g5!

Now White gets a strong attack on the g-file. 16.♘f5?! ♗xf5 17.gxf5 d5 is not so clear.

16...♘d7

16…hxg5 17.♗xg5 ♘b8 18.♔h2 ♘bd7 19.♖g1 ♔h8 20.♘f5±.

17.♕h5 hxg5 18.♗xg5 f6??

18…♘f6 limits the damage, but White's attack is strong after 19.♕f3 d5 20.♔h2 ♕d6 21.♖g1±.

19.♗b3+

1-0

Solution 53

Evgeny Janev 2460

Metody Stoinev 2285

Kesarovski 2005 (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.♗b3 h6 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♘c4 a6 9.h3 b5 10.♘e3 ♗e6 11.0-0 ♗b6 12.♖e1 d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5

14.♘g4!

This typical jump forces Black to give up the bishop pair. 14.♘xd5? ♗xd5 15.♘xe5 is met by 15...♘xe5 16.♖xe5 ♗xb3 17.axb3 ♗xf2+=.

14...♗xg4

14...f6? 15.c4 bxc4 16.dxc4 ♘de7 17.c5+–.

15.hxg4 ♕d6 16.g5 ♘f4?

16...hxg5 17.♗xg5 ♖ae8 18.♕e2 ♘f6 19.♘d2±, due to the pressure on the light squares.

17.♗xf4 exf4 18.d4 h5?! 19.♘h4 g6 20.♕d3 ♘e7 21.♖xe7

1-0

Solution 54

Regina Pokorna 2347

Mario Castiglione 2219

Slovakia tt (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗h5 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♖e1 ♗b6 10.♘f1 ♘a5 11.♗b5 d5?

11...h6 is called for.

12.♘g3!

12.g4?! ♗g6 13.♘xe5 dxe4 14.d4±.

12...dxe4

12...♗g6 13.♘xe5±.

12...♗xf3 13.♕xf3 dxe4 14.dxe4 ♘e8 15.♘f5±.

13.♘xh5 exf3?

13...♘xh5 14.♖xe4 f6 15.d4 exd4 16.cxd4±.

14.♗g5 ♕d6 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♕xf3 ♔h8 17.♘xf6 a6 18.♕f5 ♔g7 19.♕g5+

1-0

Solution 55

Sergey Smagin 2583
Aleksey Aleksandrov 2619
Bundesliga B 1999/2000 (1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.♗b3 ♗a7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 ♘e7 10.♖e1 ♘g6 11.♘f1 ♘h5 12.d4 ♘hf4 13.♘g3 ♗d7 14.♘f5 ♖e8?

14...exd4 15.cxd4 d5 was called for.

15.h4! exd4?

15...♗e6 was called for, but White's initiative continues, e.g. 16.g3 ♗xb3 17.♕xb3 ♘h5 18.♗g5 ♕d7 19.♕d1 f6 20.♗e3 ♕f7 21.♘d2 ♘e7 22.♕f3±.

16.h5 ♗xf5 17.exf5 ♖xe1+ 18.♘xe1 d3 19.hxg6 ♘e2+ 20.♔f1 ♕h4 21.gxf7+ ♔f8 22.♘xd3 ♘g3+ 23.fxg3 ♕h1+ 24.♔e2 ♕xg2+ 25.♔e1 d5 26.♗f4 ♖d8 27.♕e2 ♕h1+ 28.♔d2

1-0

Solution 56

Michael Oratovsky 2536
Diego Adla 2503
Spain tt 2004 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.♘bd2 ♗a7 7.h3 0-0 8.♗b3 d6 9.♘f1 ♗e6 10.♘g3 ♕d7 11.♗a4 b5 12.♗c2 d5 13.exd5 ♗xd5 14.0-0 h6 15.♗e3 ♖fe8 16.♗xa7 ♖xa7 17.♖e1 ♖aa8 18.♖e3 ♘h7 19.♕e2 f6 20.♖d1 ♘f8

21.d4! ♗xf3?

21…exd4 is forced, but White keeps the initiative in typical style: 22.♘xd4 ♖xe3 23.♕xe3 ♖e8 24.♕f4 ♘xd4 25.♕xd4 c6 26.♘f5 and the defence is not easy.

22.♕xf3 exd4 23.♗e4 ♘e5 24.♗d5+

1-0

Due to 24…♔h8 25.♖xe5 ♖xe5 26.♗xa8+–.

Solution 57

Peter Korzubov 2455
Alexander Zajogin 2380
Minsk ch-BLR 1994 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 ♗a7 7.♖e1 d6 8.♗b3 0-0 9.♘bd2 ♔h8 10.♘f1 ♘g4 11.d4 exd4 12.cxd4 f5?! 13.♗g5 ♘f6 14.♘g3 fxe4?!

15.♖xe4!

15.♘xe4? ♗g4 16.♘xf6 gxf6 17.♗e3 d5 is not clear.

15...h6

15...d5 16.♖h4 ♗e6 17.♗c2 ♗g8 18.♕d3 ♕d7 19.♘e5 ♘xe5 20.dxe5 ♗xf2+ 21.♔h1 ♘e4 22.♖xe4+–.

15...♘e7 16.♕d3 ♘xe4 17.♕xe4 ♖e8 18.♗c2+–.

16.♖h4! d5

16...♘e7 17.♗xh6 gxh6 18.♖xh6+ ♔g7 19.♕d2 ♘h7 20.♘g5 ♖h8 21.♘xh7 ♖xh7 22.♕g5++–.

17.♕d3 ♘e7 18.♗c2 ♔g8

18...♘e4 19.♖xe4 dxe4 20.♕xe4 ♗f5 21.♘xf5 hxg5 22.♘xe7+–.

19.♗xf6 ♖xf6 20.♕h7+ ♔f8 21.♘h5

1-0

Solution 58

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Aleksandar Vrbljanac 2281

Belgrade ch-SRB sf 2016 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.0-0 d5 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♖e1

The move played most often. The modern trend 8.a4!? is dealt with in Chapter 4.2.

8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗h5 10.♘bd2 ♖e8

10...♘b6 is the main move – see Chapter 4.1.

11.d4?

White is not yet ready for concrete action. The main move 11.♘e4! gives White a pleasant initiative in typical fashion, and scores very well, e.g. 11...♗b6 12.♗g5 ♕d7 (12...f6? 13.♗xf6±) 13.b4 (13.♘xe5!?N is also good for White) 13...♔h8?! 14.♗xd5 ♕xd5 15.c4 ♕d7 16.c5± Bulmaga-Khouri, Abu Dhabi 2015.

11...♗b6 12.g4

12.dxe5 is just met by 12...♘xe5! 13.g4 ♘f4 with an attack.

12...♗g6 13.♘xe5?

Only after 13.♘f1 ♘f6 can White take on e5: 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♕xd1 16.♖xd1 ♖xe5 17.♗e3=.

13...♘xe5 14.dxe5

14.♖xe5 ♖xe5 15.dxe5 ♗xf2+ 16.♔xf2 ♕h4+–+.

14...♗xf2+!

A typical shot.

15.♔xf2 ♕h4+ 16.♔f1 ♕xh3+ 17.♔f2?! ♕h2+ 18.♔f1 ♕h3+?! 19.♔f2?! ♕h2+ 20.♔f1 ♖xe5?

20...♕h1+ 21.♔f2 ♕h4+ 22.♔f1 ♘b6–+.

21.♘f3?

21.♖xe5 ♕h1+ 22.♔f2 ♕xd1 23.♗xd5 ♕xg4 24.♘f3 limits the damage.

21...♕h3+ 22.♔f2 ♖xe1 23.♕xd5 ♖ae8 24.♕d7 ♕h1?

24...♖1e7–+.

25.♗f4

1-0

Solution 59

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Magesh Panchanathan 2580

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1 d6 7.a4 ♘a5 8.♗a2 c5 9.c3 ♘c6 10.♘a3 h6 11.♗d2 a6

12.♘c4

12.h3!N. White should react with this nice waiting move, which improves the position on the kingside. The problem with the natural 12.♘c4 is that Black can put his light-squared bishop uncontested on its dream square e6. For a detailed analysis of 12.h3!N see Chapter 3 (main line after 7…♘a5/10…h6!?). Now 12…♗e6?! can be met by 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.b4, with initiative on the queenside.

12...♗e6 13.h3 ♖e8 14.♕b1 ♗f8 15.b4 b5 16.♘e3 ♗xa2 17.♖xa2 cxb4 18.cxb4

And now

18...bxa4!N

with 19…d5 to follow, equalises for Black. In the game Black played 18…♕d7, but it was drawn later anyway.

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